



Board of Trustees Meeting

Lincoln Center | 1325 Poplar St. | Helena, MT 59601

Tuesday, May 13th, 2025 - 5:30 p.m.

Lincoln Board of Trustees Conference Room and
via TEAMS

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AGENDA

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

II. **REVIEW OF AGENDA**

III. **RECOGNITIONS**

A. **2025 Montana School Counselor of the Year**

Congratulations to Krystal Ferguson, who has been selected as the 2025 Montana School Counselor of the Year! This prestigious award recognizes Krystal's outstanding dedication, leadership, and unwavering commitment to supporting the academic, social, and emotional growth of her students. We are incredibly proud to celebrate this well-deserved honor with her.

B. **National Council of Excellence Award-Helena High School**

Congratulations to the Helena High School Student Council for receiving the National Council of Excellence Award!! This award recognizes their outstanding leadership, service, and commitment to creating a positive impact within the school community. A special thank you to their advisor, Samantha Humphrey, for her dedicated guidance and support in helping the Student Council achieve this remarkable honor. We are incredibly proud of their achievement!

C. **Recognition of Achievement: Seal of Biliteracy Recipients**

Congratulations to the outstanding students from Capital High and Helena High who have earned the Seal of Biliteracy, an honor recognized at both the state and national levels, awarded to students who demonstrate proficiency in two or more languages. This achievement reflects the hard work of both English Learners and World Language students who have met rigorous standards through formal testing. Their success highlights the importance of multilingualism and

cultural understanding in our schools and community. We commend these students for their dedication and academic excellence.

Congratulations to the following Capital High students: Zaraj Carrucini-Cintron, Evan Colberg, Lyric Lanes, Adeline Walters, Hollis Elliot, Liliana Hanson, Sophie Shanight, and Perla Carrucini.

Congratulations to the following Helena High students: Eva Skibicki, Evelyn Callery, Olivia Cook, Abigale Arnold-Jacques, Gillian Bovingdon, Sofia Cetraro, Madison Demmons, Luke Ruch, Tea Woodland, Ricky Robbins, Dakota Harmon, Anna Sanchez, and Adrienne Taylor.

IV. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

V. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

This is the time for comment on public matters that are not on the agenda. Public matters do not include any pending legal matters, private personnel issues or private student issues. Please do not attempt to address such issues at this time or you will be ruled out of order. The Board cannot enter into a discussion during General Public Comment.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Consent Action Items

1. Personnel Actions
2. Warrants
3. Approval of FY 2024-25 Out-Of-District Attendance Agreements (Non-Resident Students Attending HPS)
4. 4.8.25 Board of Trustees Full Board Meeting Minutes
5. 4.9.25 Board of Trustees Special Board Meeting Minutes-Public Hearing on Potential Closure of Hawthorne Elementary School

B. Items For Action

1. Approval of Energy Performance Contracting Board Resolution
2. Approval of HMS Exterior Painting Bid
3. Approval of Resolution Requesting County to Conduct 2026 Elections

C. Items For Information

1. Policy 5055: Leaves of Absence
2. Policy 5085: Substitutes and Student Teachers/Interns
3. Policy 5051: Insurance Benefits for Employees
4. Boundary Recommendations Update

D. Reports

1. Student Representatives Report
2. Helena Education Association Report
3. Facilities & Technology Committee Report
4. Budget & Finance Committee Report
5. Teaching & Learning Committee Report
6. Policy Committee Report
7. Health Benefits Committee Report
8. Wellness Committee Report
9. Montana School Boards Association Report
10. Parent Council Visit Report

VII. UPCOMING MEETINGS

VIII. BOARD/SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

IX. ADJOURNMENT

HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting

Meeting Date: 5/13/2025

Item I.

- ☒ Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance
- ☐ Review of Agenda
- ☐ Recognitions
- ☐ Superintendent's Report
- ☐ General Public Comment
- ☐ Consent Action Items
- ☐ Items For Action
- ☐ Items For Information
- ☐ Reports
- ☐ Upcoming Meetings
- ☐ Board/Superintendent Comments
- ☐ Adjournment

Item Title: **Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance**

HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting

Meeting Date: 5/13/2025

Item II.

☐ Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

☒ Review of Agenda

☐ Recognitions

☐ Superintendent's Report

☐ General Public Comment

☐ Consent Action Items

☐ Items For Action

☐ Items For Information

☐ Reports

☐ Upcoming Meetings

☐ Board/Superintendent Comments

☐ Adjournment

Item Title: Review of Agenda

HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting

Item III.

Meeting Date: 5/13/2025

☐ Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

☐ Review of Agenda

☒ Recognitions

☐ Superintendent's Report

☐ General Public Comment

☐ Consent Action Items

☐ Items For Action

☐ Items For Information

☐ Reports

☐ Upcoming Meetings

☐ Board/Superintendent Comments

☐ Adjournment

- Item Title: **Recognitions**
- A. 2025 Montana School Counselor of the Year
 - B. National Council of Excellence Award-Helena High School
 - C. Recognition of Achievement: Seal of Biliteracy Recipients

HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting

Meeting Date: 5/13/2025

Item IV.

☐ Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

☐ Review of Agenda

☐ Recognitions

☒ Superintendent's Report

☐ General Public Comment

☐ Consent Action Items

☐ Items For Action

☐ Items For Information

☐ Reports

☐ Upcoming Meetings

☐ Board/Superintendent Comments

☐ Adjournment

Item Title: Superintendent's Report

HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT #1
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

To: Board Chair Ms. Siobhan Hathhorn and Board of Trustees
FROM: Mr. Wetz, Superintendent
RE: Superintendent Report
DATE: May 13th, 2025

- Recognition
 - HPS Administration and Counseling Staff
 - EHHS Support
 - May 6th Election Day
 - Recognition of Karen Ogden, Communications Specialist
 - Recognition of Trustee Jeff Hindoien
 - Recognition of Charlie Snellman, Capital High Student Board Representative
 - Recognition of Adella Harris, Helena High Student Board Representative
 - Helena Education Foundation-Celebration of Excellence
 - Board of Trustees Work Session at Kessler Elementary School-Thank You, Principal Thatcher, Staff, & Students
 - Congratulations to the following 105.3 KMTX Teacher of the Month Recipients:
 - March-Mrs. Miranda Parisi, Central Elementary School
 - April-Mrs. Dilone' Mouledous, Kessler Elementary School
 - May 1 National School Principal's Day
 - May 2 School Lunch Hero Day
 - May 5-9 National Teacher Appreciation Week
 - May 6 National Teacher Appreciation Day
 - May 7 National School Nurse Day
 - May 9 School Communicators Day
 - May 18 National Speech Pathologist Day
 - Other
- New Business
 - Activities Director Interviews
 - HEA/HPS Consensus Bargaining
 - Graduation Planning
 - Master Facilities Planning
 - Pre Bond Work - SMA
 - Helena High School
 - Capital High School
 - Kessler Elementary

HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT #1
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

- Activity Facilities Pre-Planning
 - 2025 Legislative Session-Complete
 - Continuing Work with CMS To Develop a Compensation Manual and Classification Tool – HR
 - HPS Self-Funded Health Care RFP
 - May 27th Update
 - AA Decennial Study Strategic Planning
 - 2025-26 SY Budget
 - Staffing & Operations
 - Other
- Outreach/Meetings
 - League of Women Voters Presentation
 - Helena Chamber Board of Directors Meeting
 - HEA/HPS Consensus Bargaining
 - Board of Health Meeting
 - Board of Health Finance Committee
 - CHS Community Meeting
 - Kessler Community Meeting
 - AA Superintendents
 - Parent Advisory Committee
 - Teacher Advisory Committee
 - Board Leadership
 - HSD/HEA Meeting
 - HEF
 - HEF Executive Committee
 - Cabinet & Leadership
 - TV, Print, Radio, Media
 - CMS Meetings
 - SAM 2025 Legislative Advocacy Meetings
 - Bond Committee Meeting – Working Team
 - Mr. Keith Meyer Retirement Celebration
 - Other
- Other

HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting

Meeting Date: 5/13/2025

Item V.

☐ Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

☐ Review of Agenda

☐ Recognitions

☐ Superintendent's Report

☒ General Public Comment

☐ Consent Action Items

☐ Item For Action

☐ Items For Information

☐ Reports

☐ Upcoming Meetings

☐ Board/Superintendent Comments

☐ Adjournment

Item Title: General Public Comment

HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting

Meeting Date: 5/13/2025

Item VI.A.1 - A.5

- ☐
- Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance
-
- ☐
- Review of Agenda
-
- ☐
- Recognitions
-
- ☐
- Superintendent's Report
-
- ☐
- General Public Comment
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- Consent Action Items
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- ☐
- Item For Action
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- ☐
- Items For Information
-
- ☐
- Reports
-
- ☐
- Upcoming Meetings
-
- ☐
- Board/Superintendent Comments
-
- ☐
- Adjournment

Item Title: **Consent Action Items**

1. Personnel Actions

2. Warrants

3. Approval of FY 2024-25 Out-Of-District Attendance Agreements (Non-Resident Students Attending HPS)

4. 4.8.25 Board of Trustees Full Board Meeting Minutes

5. 4.9.25 Board of Trustees Special Board Meeting Minutes-Public Hearing on Potential Closure of Hawthorne Elementary School

Board Action	1st Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Other
Hathhorn					
McKee					
Robison					
Satre					
Hindoien					
Cleatus					
Walsh					
Armstrong					

PERSONNEL ACTIONS

April 23, 2025 – May 13, 2025

CERTIFIED PERSONNEL

Terminations/Retirements

<u>Location/Assignment</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Effective</u>
Four Georgians/School Nurse	Allen, Andrea	Non-Renewal	06/10/2025
HHS/Mathematics	Ballard, Mikelle	Contract Fulfilled	06/11/2025
HHS/Spanish	Baranek, Leah	Contract Fulfilled	06/11/2025
Broadwater/Kindergarten	Boese, Courtney	Contract Fulfilled	06/10/2025
Hawthorne/Physical Education	Brand, Teaghan	Contract Fulfilled	04/11/2025
Hawthorne/Part-time Music (.75 FTE)	Cantrell, Caitlin	Non-Renewal	06/10/2025
PAL/World Cultures	Cech, Isaiah	Non-Renewal	06/11/2025
Central/Special Education-Resource	Cook, Amanda	Non-Renewal	06/10/2025
Four Georgians/Special Educ.-Resource	Fadely, Emily	Non-Renewal	06/10/2025
CHS/Health & Physical Education	Frankino, Jenna	Contract Fulfilled	06/11/2025
CHS/Mathematics	George, John	Contract Fulfilled	05/02/2025
Four Georgians/Kindergarten	Gomes, Debbie	Contract Fulfilled	06/10/2025
HHS/Business Education	Humphrey, Samantha	Retirement	06/11/2025
CRA/Mathematics	Johnson, Nicholas	Non-Renewal	06/10/2025
Bryant/Speech-Language Pathologist	Kettler, Susan	Resignation	06/10/2025
Hawthorne/LOAWOP	Klock, Trisha	Resignation	06/30/2025
SSC/Occupational Therapist	Long, Kaitlyn	Resignation	06/10/2025
HMS/Choir (.5 FTE)	McLellan, Judy	Contract Fulfilled	06/10/2025
HHS/Mathematics	Mercier, Jennifer	Non-Renewal	06/11/2025
Warren/Grade 1	Meredyk, Emily	Non-Renewal	06/10/2025
Hawthorne/Grade 3 – 4 Combination	Merritt, Valerie	Non-Renewal	06/10/2025
CRA/School Nurse	Mitchell, Kelsey	Non-Renewal	06/10/2025
Broadwater-CRA/School Nurse	Otteson, Mamie	Contract Fulfilled	03/05/2025
HHS/Special Education-Resource	Pepper, David	Non-Renewal	06/11/2025
Broadwater/Grade 4 – 5 Combo	Quigley, Grayson	Non-Renewal	06/10/2025
CHS/English	Rummel, Robert	Contract Fulfilled	06/11/2025
Rossiter/Grade 3	Schuma, Maggie	Non-Renewal	06/10/2025
HMS/School Nurse	Vitousek, Howard	Contract Fulfilled	06/10/2025

Hawthorne/School Psychologist
HMS/Music
CRA/Mathematics

Weisberg, Alexandria
Yahvah, Carson
Yochum, Mason

Contract Fulfilled
Resignation
Contract Fulfilled

06/10/2025
05/25/2025
06/10/2025

Leaves

<u>Location/Assignment</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Term</u>	<u>Type of Leave</u>
HMS/School Psychologist	Burkhart, Trisha	2025-2026	LOAWOP
4-G's-Hawthorne/School Psychologist	Greenwood, Sarah	2025-2026	LOAWOP
HHS/Spanish	Sund, Alayna	2025-2026	LOAWOP

CLASSIFIED PERSONNEL

Appointments

<u>Location/Assignment</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Offered Salary</u>	<u>Accepted Salary</u>	<u>Start Date</u>
Jefferson/SACC Para Educator	Cooper, Kylie	\$15.10/hr.	\$15.10/hr.	05/05/2025
IT/Network Engineer	Grau, Christopher	\$86,664.76/yr.	\$86,664.76/yr.	06/02/2025

Terminations/Retirements

<u>Location/Assignment</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Effective</u>
HHS/Evening Custodian	Bishop, Jared	Resignation	05/30/2025
CRA/Evening Custodian	Bishop, Tiana	Resignation	05/30/2025
CHS/Office Manager	Fuller, Gina	Resignation	06/18/2025
Smith/Evening Custodian	Kirtley, Vicki	Resignation	04/30/2025
Jim Darcy/Evening Custodian	Linjanen, Zachary	Resignation	05/15/2025
HMS/Evening Float Custodian	Mayberry, Jakob	Resignation	04/22/2025
Lincoln/Communications Specialist		Ogden, Karen Resignation	
		05/16/2025	
Kessler/Para Educator			Schwagerl, Andrea
Resignation			04/28/2025

Leaves

<u>Location/Assignment</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Term</u>	<u>Type of Leave</u>
Bryant/Para Educator	Clanin, Jessica	9/11/2025 to 12/19/2025	LOA

SUPPLEMENTARY CONTRACT ASSIGNMENT

Tyson	Reiter	Head Track Coach-Boys	\$644.00	HMS	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Lori	Smith	Head Track Coach-Girls	\$644.00	HMS	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Kristin	Bishop	Track Coach-Girls	\$562.00	HMS	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Amanda	Crowson	Track Coach-Boys	\$562.00	HMS	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Mikayla	Curtis	Track Coach-Girls	\$562.00	HMS	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Madison	Davis	Track Coach	\$562.00	HMS	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Kevin	Flatow	Track Coach-Boys	\$562.00	HMS	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Georgia	Fuhrman	Track Coach-Boys	\$562.00	HMS	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Sara	Grotbo	Track Coach-Girls	\$562.00	HMS	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Anna	Hill	Track Coach-Girls	\$562.00	HMS	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Audrey	Howard	Track Coach-Girls	\$562.00	HMS	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Heather	Lieberg	Track Coach-Girls	\$562.00	HMS	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Brayden	Nicholson	Track Coach-Boys	\$562.00	HMS	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Andrew	Roberts	Track Coach-Boys	\$562.00	HMS	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Christopher	Toivonen	Track Coach-Boys	\$562.00	HMS	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Candice	Dalzell	Track Coach	\$562.00	HMS	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
James	Sheridan	Head Track-Boys & Girls	\$793.00	CRA	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Sarah	Hogan	Track Coach-Girls	\$562.00	CRA	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
James P	Hogan	Track Coach-Boys	\$562.00	CRA	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Leslie	Hagengruber	Track Coach-Girls	\$562.00	CRA	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Michael	McGinley	Track Coach-Boys	\$562.00	CRA	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Richard	Fuzesy	Track Coach-Girls	\$562.00	CRA	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Casey	Lyndes	Track Coach-Boys	\$562.00	CRA	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Glendifer	Wall	Track Coach-Boys	\$562.00	CRA	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Amanda	Mongillo	Track Coach	\$562.00	CRA	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Emily	Forsman	Track Coach-Girls	\$562.00	CRA	23-Apr-25	30-May-25
Jilyn	Chandler	Track Coach-Boys & Girls	\$562.00	CRA	23-Apr-25	30-May-25

Helena School District #1

Warrants April 1 to 30, 2025

Direct Deposits: \$3,322,813.47

Payroll Warrants: 70132199-70132229

Payroll Deduction: 69304306-69304329

Non-Check Payroll Deductions: \$ 5,296,354.34

Non-Check Accts Payable Deductions: \$ 491,849.17 **Allegiance Not Included

Non-Check Accts Payable Deductions- HHS Extracurricular: \$0

Claim Warrants: 69304036-69304444

CRA Middle School Student Activity Checks: 17458-17466

HMS Middle School Student Activity Checks: 8797

Capital High Student Activity Checks: 23492-24991

Helena High Student Activity Checks: 36940-36971

Cancelled Warrants: \$2,763.22

We certify that all warrants herein listed were prepared and previously paid for, are just and correct to the best of our knowledge, and that the board of trustees has authorized the issuance of the same.

Chairperson _____

Business Manager _____

APPROVAL OF **FY 2024-25** OUT-OF-DISTRICT ATTENDANCE AGREEMENTS
(NONRESIDENT STUDENTS ATTENDING HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT)

Fiscal Year 2024-25

Discretionary Attendance:

Grade	District of Residence	Address	School of Attendance
4	East Helena K-12	East Helena, MT 59635	Bryant Elementary

Mandatory Attendance:

Grade	District of Residence	Address	School of Attendance
4	Kalispell Elementary	Kalispell, MT 59901	Bryant Elementary
9	Bozeman High School	Bozeman, MT 59715	Capital High School

**APPROVAL OF FY 2024-25 OUT-OF-DISTRICT ATTENDANCE AGREEMENTS
(NONRESIDENT STUDENTS ATTENDING HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT)**

Running Total of FY2024-25 Out-of-District Attendance Agreements

Address																										
Grade	East Helena	Clancy	Montana City	Jefferson City	Basin	Wolf Creek	Boulder	Elliston	Trinity	Chinook	Butte	Billings	Deer Lodge	Missoula	Kalispell	Bozeman	Townsend	Radersberg	Anaconda	Browning	Winston	Ronan	Superior	Whitehall	Total	
Ksprouts	3								1																4	
K	5	1				1			6															1	14	
1	11	4							5																20	
2	6	1				1	1	1	5															1	16	
3	4	1							6	1												1			13	
4	9	2							4						1										16	
5	6		1				1		10		1	1													20	
6	5	1						1	3		1												1		12	
7	3	2			1				6																12	
8	3	5	1			1		2	3				1												16	
9	7	50	10									1		1		1			1						71	
10	10	30	2														1	1		1					45	
11	12	19	4	3																					38	
12	12	29	3	2													1	1			1				49	
	96	145	21	5	1	3	2	4	49	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	346	



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, April 8th, 2025
5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE – Present unless otherwise noted.

Siobhan Hathhorn, Chair
Jennifer McKee, Vice Chair
Linda Cleatus, Trustee
Jennifer Walsh, Trustee
Kay Satre, Trustee
Rachel Robison, Trustee
Janet Armstrong, Trustee
Charlie Snellman, Capital High School Student Representative for the Board of Trustees
Rex Wertz, Superintendent
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Janelle Mickelson, Business Director
Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff
Todd Verrill, Facilities Director
Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director
Gary Myers, Director of Educational Technology
Kaitlyn Hess, Data & Federal Programs Director
Justine Alberts, Curriculum Director
Jane Shawn, HEA President
Karen Ogden, Communications Officer
Lisa Cordingley, HEF Executive Director
Brian Kessler, Helena High School Principal
Brett Zanto, Capital High School Principal
Kathleen Prody, C.R. Anderson Middle School Principal
Rob Brewer, Facilities Manager
Many guests of the public as well as Helena School District Staff and Students

I. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. and the Board participated in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. REVIEW AGENDA

The Board of Trustees reviewed the agenda and there were no suggested changes.

The Board of Trustees moved on to the recognitions portion of the agenda.

III. RECOGNITIONS

The Board of Trustees recognized the students listed below.

Harrison Writing Awards

The Board of Trustees is proud to recognize the exceptional talent of the 2025 recipients of the Harrison Writing Awards. The Harrison Writing Awards include up to four \$350 awards given annually in the categories of either expository or creative writing to HPS high school students by the Helena Education Foundation. Dr. Lee Harrison endowed these awards in memory of her mother Ethel Harrison.

Professional writers in the community review submissions and select the winning pieces. The prose and poetry of Harrison award winners are featured in the annual Pen & Ink magazine. The Foundation organizes a community launch party for the magazine at which students have the opportunity to share their works.

The 2025 recipients of the Harrison Writing Award are:

- Zaraj Carrucini (CHS) for "Library Guardian" and "Tiger in a Birch Tree Forest"
- Fiona Kuntz (CHS) for "Ms. Shallot" and "The Woods"
- Dane Moser (HHS) for "A Winter's Thought"

Going to the Sun Awards

The Board of Trustees is proud to recognize the first-ever recipients of the Going to the Sun Award, a prestigious new initiative by the Helena Education Foundation. The Helena Education Foundation is thrilled to announce the inaugural year of the Going to the Sun Award, providing up to four \$350 awards to be given annually to HPS high school student visual artists by the Helena Education Foundation beginning in 2025. The Going to the Sun Award was established by a local family of longtime advocates/supporters of Helena Public Schools and the Helena Education Foundation. Professional artists in the community reviewed submissions and selected the winning pieces. The artwork of the Going to the Sun Award recipients will be featured in the annual Pen & Ink magazine, as well as at the community launch party for the magazine, hosted by HEF to honor the student editors, writers, and artists.

The first ever recipients of the Going to the Sun Award are:

- Faith Howard (HHS) for a series of pen and ink drawings
- Lauren Bechdol (CHS) "Portrait"
- Meika Arensmeyer (CHS) for "The View in a Box"
- Mason Karlin (HHS) for "Through the Looking Glass"

Science Olympiad Winners-Capital High School

The Board of Trustees is proud to recognize the outstanding achievements of Capital High School students who recently earned 1st place finishes at the State Science Olympiad competition.

Codebusters: Rowan Humbert, Sydney Harman, and Fiona Kuntz

Optics: Isaac Urban and Kate Drynan

Their dedication, hard work, and teamwork were instrumental in securing these impressive results. Please join us in congratulating these exceptional students for their remarkable accomplishments in the Science Olympiad competition. We would also like to extend a special thanks to their teacher advisors, Ms. Humbert and Ms. Urban for their unwavering support and guidance, which helped these students excel in the competition.

Science Olympiad Winners-C.R. Anderson Middle School

The Board of Trustees is proud to recognize the outstanding achievements of C.R. Anderson Middle School students who recently earned 1st place finishes at the State Science Olympiad competition.

Meteorology (Gold) – Eileen McLane & Ellery Hughey

Their dedication, hard work, and teamwork were instrumental in securing these impressive results. Please join us in congratulating these exceptional students for their remarkable accomplishments in the Science Olympiad competition. We would also like to extend a special thanks to their teacher advisors, Ms. Lane and Ms. Hagengruber for their unwavering support and guidance, which helped these students excel in the competition.

Business Professionals of America (BPA) National Qualifiers-Capital High School

The Board of Trustees is proud to recognize the students listed below, who competed at the Montana State Business Professionals of America Conference and earned the honor of advancing to the national competition. We extend a special thank you to Ms. Toivonen for her unwavering support and guidance, which played a crucial role in helping these students excel in the competition.

- Kathleen Cook – 1st Advanced Interview Skills, 4th Java Programming
- Kayle Andriolo – 1st Computer Programming Concepts, 1st Digital Marketing Concepts, 1st Financial Math and Analysis, 1st Information Technology Concepts, 1st Java Programming, 2nd Python Programming
- Ryan Fuller – 2nd Server Administration Using Microsoft, 5th Device Configuration & Troubleshooting
- Sam Flynn – 2nd Java Programming, 3rd Python Programming, 4th IT Concepts
- Emiley Ereth – 1st Economic Research Project
- McKenzy Heppner – 1st Health Research Presentation
- Nolan Holzer – 5th Python Programming
- Brooklynn Haab, Joey Casey, Kathleen Cook, McKenzy Heppner – 1st Presentation Team
- Brooklynn Haab, Emiley Ereth, Hollis Elliott – 3rd Visual Design Team

Business Professionals of America (BPA) National Qualifier-Helena High School

The Board of Trustees is proud to recognize Lorenzo Phoenix, who competed at the Montana State Business Professionals of America Conference and earned the honor of advancing to the national competition. We also extend a special thank you to Mrs. Humphrey for her unwavering support and guidance, which were instrumental in helping Lorenzo and other students excel in the competition.

- Lorenzo Phoenix-3rd Java Programming

Mock Trial State Champions-Helena High School

The Board of Trustees would like to congratulate the Helena High School Copper Team for winning the Mock Trial State Championship! A special congratulations to team members Mia Taylor, Kenzie Criswell, Addie Murray, Maverick Franklin, Gabbi LaVoie, Grey Gildroy, and Layla Riggs (Courtroom Artist). The Board would also like to extend special thanks to advisor Mr. Askin, and Attorney Coaches Morrison, Dal Nogare, and Zupanic for their unwavering support and guidance, which played a pivotal role in the team's success.

The Board of Trustees moved on to review the presentation portion of the agenda.

IV. PRESENTATION

The Board of Trustees viewed the 2024 District Audit presentation presented by Mr. Anthony Gerharz, Senior Audit Manager, Wipfli LLP. Mr. Gerharz thanked Mrs. Mickelson and her team for their support, as their cooperation is crucial for the audit process. He explained that the audit includes a federal single audit to ensure compliance with federal spending when over \$750,000 is used. The audit process involves assessing risks and transactions to determine whether the financial statements are materially accurate and reliable.

Mr. Gerharz was pleased to announce that the district received an unmodified audit opinion, meaning the financial statements are materially correct and can be relied upon. There were no findings of material weaknesses or significant deficiencies related to internal controls. Additionally, there were no issues with federal awards, and the special education cluster was thoroughly reviewed, with everything found to be in order. Mr. Gerharz addressed questions from the board before the meeting transitioned to the review of the Superintendent's Report.

V. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Wertz presented his Superintendent Report to the Board of Trustees and discussed topics including but not limited to:

Recognition

- Board of Trustees Work Session At Helena High School- March 25th, Thank You Principal Brian Kessler & HHS Staff
- April 2 National Paraprofessional Appreciation Day
- April 4 National School Librarian Appreciation Day
- April 7-11 National Assistant Principal Week
- April 21-25 Public School Volunteer Week / National Volunteer Recognition Week
- April 22 School Bus Driver Appreciation Day
- April 23 Administrative Professionals Day
- Other

New Business

- Board of Trustees Special Board Meeting-Public Hearing on Potential Closure of Hawthorne Elementary School-Wednesday April 9th, 2025, 5:30 p.m. PD Center 1325 Poplar Street Helena, MT
- Boundary Recommendation – Ongoing work and communications
- HEA & HPS Consensus Bargaining - Week of April 7th
- Pre-Bond Planning Key Stakeholders Meeting At HHS-SMA
- CHS Community Meeting-SMA
- Master Facilities Planning
 - Pre Bond Work – SMA
 - Helena High School
 - Capital High School
 - Kessler Elementary
 - Activity Facilities Pre-Planning
- 2025 Legislative Session
- Continuing Work with CMS To Develop a Compensation Manual and Classification Tool – HR
- 2025 – 2026 Projected Budgets for High School and Elementary
 - Financial Outlooks

- Federal Funding Uncertainties
- HB 15 – 3% Inflationary Increase
- Impacts of Technology Levies
- 3 Year Budget Reduction Efforts Overview
- Deficits for 2025-26 SY – Projected
 - Elementary
 - High School
- Other

Outreach/Meetings

- AA Superintendents
- Parent Advisory Committee
- Teacher Advisory Committee
- Board Leadership
- HSD/HEA Meeting
- HEF
- HEF Executive Committee
- HEF – Interviews for new Executive Director
- Hawthorne Community Meeting
- Coffee With The Principal
- Principal Thatcher-Kessler
- Cabinet & Leadership
- TV, Print, Radio Media
- CMS Meetings
- SAM 2025 Legislative Advocacy Meetings
- Bond Committee Meeting – Working Team
- Kiwanis Presentation
- Business Partner Meetings
- Pre-Bond Planning Key Stakeholders Meeting At HHS

Other

That concluded the Superintendent’s Report portion of the agenda. Superintendent Weltz responded to questions from the Board of Trustees, after which the trustees proceeded to hear general public comment.

VI. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Doug Dellwo gave general public comment. Mr. Dellwo stated that he is a former teacher in Helena and a resident of the community. Mr. Dellwo’s general public comment addressed several key topics including but not limited to concerns about communication between the district and the community. He emphasized the need to make the funding decrease more relatable by explaining how it directly impacts students, urging that parents and the community need to understand the consequences of such cuts. He also discussed the importance of engaging the community in advocacy, recommending that citizens regularly communicate with legislators in a non-combative way to support educational bills and ensure the

district's needs are met. Mr. Dellwo concluded by stressing that this grassroots involvement could make a significant difference.

Ms. Lisa Richidt gave general public comment. Ms. Richidt is a parent of three children in the school district. Ms. Richidt's general public comment addressed several key topics including but not limited to the importance of clear communication about the consequences of levies, particularly regarding the closure of neighborhood schools. She emphasized that clearer information would likely lead to higher voter turnout. Ms. Richidt also expressed concerns about the proposed boundary changes, specifically the shift of the east-west line along Grant Street, which she felt was illogical given that students could walk to the nearby middle school but would instead be assigned to a school across town. She urged the board to reconsider the boundary lines with a focus on walkability for middle school students.

Ms. Peggy Hollow-Phelps gave general public comment. Ms. Hollow-Phelps' general public comment addressed several key topics including but not limited to concerns about recent reductions in early childhood education programs, such as the closure of the Ray Bjork Learning Center. She expressed opposition to the closure of neighborhood schools, highlighting Helena's unique culture and suggesting a mix of walkable neighborhood schools with larger community schools. Ms. Hollow-Phelps also questioned the financial logic of maintaining the Front Street Learning Center while considering the closure of an elementary school, proposing that the community focus on building a new high school and updating Capital High School instead of closing existing schools.

Ms. Hanna Warhank gave general public comment. Ms. Warhank is a parent in the district and a taxpayer. Ms. Warhank's general public comment addressed several key topics including but not limited to concerns about the increasing negativity between the trustees and parents online. She emphasized that parents are advocates for their children, not the enemy, and expressed frustration over the unfair message being spread that cuts to programs like music and P.E. were due to Hawthorne. Ms. Warhank reminded the trustees that parents want to be involved and support public education.

Ms. Kathryn Dunkelberger gave general public comment. Ms. Dunkelberger is a community member, a parent of students in the district, and an employee in the district. Ms. Dunkelberger's general public comment addressed several key topics including but not limited to concerns about school closures and boundary changes. She emphasized the negative impact these decisions would have on vulnerable students, particularly those who have experienced setbacks due to the pandemic. Ms. Dunkelberger highlighted the importance of the relationships students have built with peers and staff, urging the board to recognize the life-changing consequences of disrupting these connections. She called for decisions that support students' long-term success rather than setbacks.

That concluded general public comment, and the Board of Trustees moved on to review the Consent Action Items.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Consent Action Items

1. Personnel Actions
2. Warrants
3. Approval of FY 2024-25 Out-Of-District Attendance Agreements (Nonresident Students Attending

Helena School District)

4. 3.11.25 Board of Trustees Full Board Meeting Minutes
5. 3.12.25 Board of Trustees Special Board Meeting Open Session Meeting Minutes
6. 3.12.25 Board of Trustees Special Board Meeting Closed Session Meeting Minutes
7. 3.18.25 Pre-Bond Planning Key Stakeholders Meeting Minutes
8. 3.19.25 Board of Trustees Special Board Meeting Open Session Meeting Minutes
9. 3.19.25 Board of Trustees Special Board Meeting Closed Session Meeting Minutes

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: 7-0 motion carries unanimously.

That concluded the approval of the Consent Action Items. The Board of Trustees moved on to hear reports.

B. REPORTS

1. Student Representatives Report

Mr. Charlie Snellman, Capital High School Student Representative for the Board of Trustees, presented his Student Representative Report. Mr. Snellman commented, “With spring in full swing, students and staff at Capital High are getting adjusted to the rhythm of fourth quarter. Between testing, scheduling, and an array of academic and extracurricular activities, there’s no shortage of excitement in the building.

Earlier today, CHS hosted ACT and pre-ACT testing for all juniors and sophomores. Thanks to the coordination and support of our staff, the day ran smoothly, and students were given the best environment to showcase their academic prowess.

The week before spring break, CHS celebrated Choose to Include Week—a campaign through Special Olympics as part of our designation as a Unified Champion School. Our unified classes and Special Olympics Club put on spirit days and inclusive lunchtime activities to highlight the power of belonging, acceptance, and inclusive language for students of all abilities.

Also that week, CHS Career Counselor Aspen Herndon organized a Medical Career Night, giving students and families the opportunity to hear from professionals across a wide range of medical careers. There were even virtual simulation activities for attendees to try out! In that same vein, the Helena Health Science Advisory Board hosted another fusion event, called

Neuro-Fusion, with several awesome guest speakers, pizza, and activities like designing and creating a safe helmet (for an egg), drawing up a “thinking cap,” and several myth-busting trivia games.

The Helena Health Science Advisory Board (HHSAB), in partnership with Confluence Public Health Alliance, is hosting another event, called Super Fusion on Public Health this Wednesday, April 9th, from 6:00–7:30 PM. The event will feature incredible speakers, breakout sessions led by public health professionals, and refreshments. It’s free and open to the public, and we’re excited to see continued interest in health science opportunities across the Helena community. It is important that we continue to provide opportunities and give students adequate exposure to careers that might pique their interest—in the medical career and beyond. Whether it comes in the form of a class, a CTE pathway, extracurricular organization, or any combination thereof, it is our duty to provide the best we have to our students.

Looking ahead, CHS will host a Community Bond Presentation and Tour on Wednesday, April 23rd at 6:00 PM. The event will provide information about potential facility improvements at CHS and offer guided tours for community members to see current conditions firsthand.

Meanwhile, the scheduling process for 2025–2026 is underway. Course request data was distributed to department coordinators before spring break, and our counseling team has finished student registration. We’ve officially entered the master scheduling phase! Good luck to Mr. Zanto and his team...

And, of course, Vigilante Day Parade registration is open from April 10th to April 17th! Students can register in the library foyer or through their class Teams pages.

Capital High continues to thrive this spring. Whether it’s statewide testing, inclusive programming, career exploration, or future-focused events, Bruins are leaning into every opportunity with pride and purpose.”

Ms. Adella Harris, Helena High School Student Representative for the Board of Trustees, was not in attendance this evening, so there was no report.

2. **Helena Education Association Report**

Ms. Jane Shawn, HEA President, presented the Helena Education Report. Ms. Shawn provided an update on the upcoming annual MFPE conference, which will include a rally at the Capitol on Friday, lunch with legislators, a celebration dinner, and business meetings on Saturday, such as electing officers and passing the budget. She mentioned that 17 delegates would be attending from HEA. Ms. Shawn also gave an update on the ongoing bargaining process, noting that it has been intense but productive. She expressed satisfaction with the progress made since the previous year and highlighted the positive working relationship with the district, particularly appreciating the collaborative and productive nature of the meetings.

3. **Facilities & Technology Committee Report**
There was no Facilities & Technology Committee Report this evening, as the committee will not meet until next week.
4. **Budget and Finance Committee Report**
There was no Budget and Finance Committee Report this evening, as the committee did not meet in April, but Trustee Janet Armstrong raised a suggestion for consideration. Trustee Armstrong proposed creating a document that outlines the adjustments and efforts made by the administration and board over the past three years. She believed this could help inform the public about the ongoing work and efforts, providing a clear overview of the progress made. She left this idea for the board's consideration.
5. **Policy Committee Report**
There was no Policy Committee Meeting Report this evening, as the committee did not meet in April.
6. **Teaching & Learning Committee Report**
There was no Teaching and Learning Committee Report this evening, as the committee did not meet in April.
7. **Health Benefits Committee Report**
Trustee Kay Satre presented the Health Benefits Committee meeting report. Trustee Satre reported that the Health Benefits Committee met on March 27th to determine finalists for the RFP process, evaluating proposals for medical, dental, and vision plans. The committee has yet to analyze proposals for the pharmacy component. The finalists will be asked to refine their proposals and present their best offers at an in-person interview on April 17th. The RFP process aims to ensure the best cost options for these services. Additionally, there have been no updates from the Montana School Insurance Alliance regarding their plans for the district, with the latest information indicating that their draft plans and costs are expected by late summer or early fall, which is a delay from the original timeline.
8. **Wellness Committee Report**
Ms. Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff, presented the Wellness Committee Report. The report highlighted several key initiatives, including the committee's recent visit to Helena Food Share, which supports students, particularly through the Kid Packs program. During the visit, the committee toured the facility and learned about its operations. Ms. Ridgway also shared that new vending machines offering healthier options, such as salads and sandwiches, were installed at Capital High School, where they have been well-received by students. She noted the impact of the federal cuts to the Local Foods for Schools program, which will affect access to fresh produce. Lastly, the committee discussed ongoing collaboration with local culinary programs to enhance student learning and engagement with food preparation.

9. **Montana School Boards Association Report**

There was no report from the Montana School Boards Association. Chair Hathhorn noted that the organization's primary focus has been on legislative matters.

10. **Parent Council Visit Reports**

There were no Parent Council Visit Reports this evening.

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

VIII. UPCOMING MEETINGS

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

- Wednesday, April 9th, Board of Trustees Special Board Meeting-Public Hearing on Potential Closure of Hawthorne Elementary School, 5:30 p.m., Lincoln Center
- Monday, April 14th, Facilities & Technology Committee Meeting, 12:00 p.m., Lincoln Center
- Tuesday, April 22nd, Board of Trustees Work Session, Kessler Elementary, 3:30 p.m.
- Monday, May 5th, Policy Committee Meeting, 12:00 p.m. Lincoln Center
- Wednesday, May 7th, Teaching & Learning Committee Meeting, 12:00 p.m., Lincoln Center

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

IX. BOARD COMMENTS

Trustee Jennifer Walsh thanked the community for their engagement through comments and emails, stressing the importance of being well-informed about board decisions. She highlighted the need to evaluate each financial proposal, such as levies and bonds, based on its individual merits rather than emotional factors. Trustee Walsh encouraged the public to focus on specific proposals for improvements at Helena High and Capital High and make informed decisions. She also reminded everyone that regardless of whether these proposals pass, budget decisions will still be made and will impact the district's direction. Lastly, she invited the community to attend the upcoming community meeting at Capital High to better understand the school conditions and the proposed improvements.

Board of Trustees Capital High School Student Representative Charlie Snellman shared a personal reflection on his role as a student trustee, acknowledging the challenges and rewards of his position. Although he cannot vote, he values advocating for the voices of others. He mentioned the emotional nature of last month's meeting and the challenge of not interacting directly with the

public during comment periods, though he often feels the urge to respond. Mr. Snellman emphasized the importance of truly listening, not just hearing, to the public's feedback, and balancing it with the practical considerations of the board's decisions. He concluded by encouraging everyone to focus on listening carefully and reflecting on the community's input while considering the facts and data presented.

Trustee Armstrong expressed gratitude for the wise words of the student trustees, particularly Mr. Snellman. She acknowledged the significant challenges the district is facing and reminded the public of the importance of staying involved, asking questions, and working together to address these issues. Trustee Armstrong emphasized the board's commitment to not just addressing financial difficulties, but also ensuring the district moves forward in a positive direction. She highlighted the emotional weight of the decisions the board is making and thanked the public for their engagement and support. Trustee Armstrong concluded by reaffirming the shared goal of providing the best possible education for future generations.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn adjourned the meeting at 7:26 p.m.

Candice Delvaux, Recording Secretary

Date



Superintendent

Rex Wertz
324-2001

Business Manager

Janelle Mickelson
324-2040

Board of Trustees Special Board Meeting Public Hearing on Potential Closure of Hawthorne Elementary School

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

Wednesday, April 9th, 2025
5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE – Present unless otherwise noted.

Siobhan Hathhorn, Chair
Jennifer McKee, Vice Chair
Jeff Hindoiien, Trustee
Linda Cleatus, Trustee
Jennifer Walsh, Trustee
Kay Satre, Trustee
Rachel Robison, Trustee
Janet Armstrong, Trustee
Rex Wertz, Superintendent
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Janelle Mickelson, Business Director
Todd Verrill, Facilities Director
Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director
Gary Myers, Director of Educational
Technology
Kaitlyn Hess, Data & Federal Programs
Director
Justine Alberts, Curriculum Director
Jane Shawn, HEA President
Karen Ogden, Communications Officer
Lisa Cordingley, HEF Executive Director
Elizabeth Kaleva, District Legal Counsel
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 the Board participated in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. REVIEW AGENDA

The Board of Trustees reviewed the agenda and there were no suggested changes.

The Board of Trustees moved on to hear general public comment.

III. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no general public comment and the Board of Trustees moved on to conduct the public hearing on the potential closure of Hawthorne Elementary School.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

1. Public Hearing On Potential Closure of Hawthorne Elementary School

Superintendent Rex Weltz and his administrative team reviewed the following information with the Board of Trustees and the public, and addressed all questions raised by the Board of Trustees.

Helena Public Schools - Policy 9150 Factors for Consideration

Purpose:

1. Elementary District Budget Deficit Must be Addressed.
2. Support All Elementary Students.

Recommendation for consideration: Future of Hawthorne Elementary:

1. Closure for the 2025-2026 school year
2. Closure for the 2026-2027 school year
3. Remain Open – Status Quo

Decision to be made during the June full Board Meeting 2025

Key Considerations/Factors for Possible Hawthorne Elementary School Closure:

1. Enrollment Trends and Projections:

- **Declining Enrollment:** Both the Helena School District and the State of Montana have experienced enrollment declines over the past several

years. Enrollment at Hawthorne Elementary is projected to decline further, with a significant drop from 204 students in 2023-2024 to less than 171 in 2025-2026.

- The need to overflow students from our valley schools has decreased as our elementary district enrollment numbers decrease, resulting in a reduced need to bus students into town and in particular to Hawthorne Elementary.
- **Lewis and Clark Population Trends:** A decrease in the number of 5-year-olds in the county is also contributing to reduced enrollment, particularly in the next few years.
- **Impact of Declining Enrollment:** The declining trend suggests that the school district will not see a rebound in enrollment soon.
- **Projected or actual enrollment declines support the likelihood that these declines will remain permanent.**
 - Five-year Hawthorne School Spring historical enrollment (First week of March)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total School Population</u>
2019-2020	196
2020-2021	184
2021-2022	197
2022-2023	200
2023-2024	204
2024-2025	179*

*125 in attendance area and 54 students outside attendance area.
 - Smallest Elementary School in the District with 9 classrooms in use.
 - Hawthorne will continue to decrease in enrollment. In 2025-2026 there will be a smaller incoming Kindergarten class and one of the larger classes will be moving to the middle school.
- **2025 Spring HPS average elementary school enrollment**
 - 306.5 students per school

○ **Helena School District Student Fall Enrollment**

From Office of Public Instruction: <https://gems.opi.mt.gov/>

<u>Year</u>	<u>Student Count</u>
2019-2020	8,033
2020-2021	7,773
2021-2022	7,683
2022-2023	7,801
2023-2024	7,607
2024-2025	7,420

- **State Public School Fall Student Enrollment**

From Office of Public Instruction: <https://gems.opi.mt.gov/>

<u>Year</u>	<u>Student Count</u>
2019-2020	149,181
2020-2021	145,632
2021-2022	146,632
2022-2023	149,198
2023-2024	150,573
2024-2025	148,585

- **Lewis and Clark population trend for 5-year-olds**

From: <https://commerce.mt.gov/Data?Research/People-Housing?Population>

Year	Count of Children	Percent Change
2020	878	
2021	891	1.5%
2022	877	-1.6%
2023	790	-9.9%
2024	838	6.1%
2025	779	-7.0%
2026	768	-1.4%
2027	773	0.7%
2028	771	-0.3%
2029	778	-0.9%
2030	774	-0.5%

2. Effect of Closure on Other Facilities and Programs:

- **Classroom Consolidation:** Closing Hawthorne will reduce the number of combination classes across the district, which were not implemented as an educational strategy to improve outcomes. Instead, they were primarily created to reduce deficits. Reinstating single grade classrooms is seen as a positive outcome for students, parents, teachers, and staff. Additionally, services like CSCT would follow best practices by reallocating services to schools with populations that have higher rates of free and reduced lunch counts and currently do not have these services.

- **Student Redistribution:** Central and Kessler Elementary Schools can safely accommodate Hawthorne students though class sizes will increase at these schools.

- Where the Hawthorne students would attend school for the 2025-2026 year should the decision be made to close.

- For the current 179 students at Hawthorne.
 - Twenty-eight 5th grade students would enter CRA 6th Grade or may apply for HMS next year.
 - Seventy-three K to 4 students would attend Central next year. They may choose to complete an in-district boundary request for other in-district schools.
 - Thirty-two K to 4 students would attend Kessler next year. They may choose to complete an in-district boundary request for other in-district schools.
 - Forty-six students K to 4 would attend their “home” in-district elementary school, this is undoing the overflow to Hawthorne students as there is space for them in their original elementary now. They may choose to complete an in-district boundary request for other in-district schools.
- Next year's Hawthorne (2025-2026) pre-registered Kindergarten students (completed in PowerSchool) total twenty.
 - Sixteen students reside in the Hawthorne attendance area.
 - Two students reside out of district.
 - Two are residents in another in-district school attendance area.
 - Thirteen of these students would attend Central next year.
 - Three students would attend Kessler.
 - Two students would be able to attend their neighborhood school.
 - Two students that are out of district could apply to an in-district school.
 - All students may choose to apply for in-district transfers.
- In-district transfer requests are decided on a first come first served basis, determined on availability, student needs, program availability, and other factors.
- Four (4) teaching positions would need to be reassigned between Central and Kessler to accommodate the shifting student enrollment. Three (3) para positions would need to be reassigned between Central and Kessler to accommodate students also.

- **Title, Special Ed, Library, and Counseling services**

- Eligible Hawthorne students would benefit from Title I resources that are not currently provided at Hawthorne but are present at Kessler and Central.
- Title I Instructional Interventionists exist at both Kessler and Central and provide direct instructional support for students.
- Title I Instructional Interventionists assist the school staff by providing professional development to improve student learning.
- Hawthorne students would benefit from having full-time library, full-time principal and full-time counseling staff available.

3. Potential for Alternative Use or Sale of Facility:

- The facility could potentially be leased or sold, with discussions already in place with real estate experts to explore these options. However, the focus should remain on the neighborhood and the community for future use.
- If leased, the revenue could support the elementary budget similar to the district's lease agreement at Ray Bjork Learning Center.

4. Financial Considerations:

- **Declining State Revenue:** Montana has been underfunding its public schools relative to inflation, leaving districts with financial gaps. The Helena School District has experienced budget shortfalls and will continue to face difficulties in maintaining operations as they have been.
- **Deferred Maintenance:** Hawthorne's aging infrastructure is another significant concern. The cost of maintaining the building has been relatively low in recent years, but the long-term deferred maintenance is significant.

Annual and Deferred Maintenance Costs for the last three years:

Data excluding three new elementary schools.

a. Annual Maintenance Costs at Hawthorne Elementary **2022-2025 SY**

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------|----------|
| i. | Total | \$44,116 |
| ii. | Average \$/Year | \$14,706 |

b. Elementary District Costs **2022-2025 SY**

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------|-------------|
| i. | Total | \$2,011,016 |
| ii. | Average \$/Year | \$83,793 |

- c. Hawthorne has been the least expensive school to maintain over the last three years due to its size.

d. Deferred Maintenance Costs at Hawthorne Elementary
(Adjusted for Inflation)

- | | | |
|------|--------------|-------------|
| i. | Total | \$4,606,608 |
| ii. | Cost/sq ft | \$168 |
| iii. | Cost/Student | \$25,735 |

e. Elementary District

- | | | |
|------|--------------|--------------|
| i. | Total | \$26,399,389 |
| ii. | Cost/sq ft | \$107 |
| iii. | Cost/Student | \$12,325 |

- f. Hawthorne accounts for 9% of the elementary district square footage but represents 17% of the deferred maintenance costs.
 - **Additional Savings:** Specific savings identified include utility savings at Hawthorne, potential savings in employee costs, and reductions in operational expenses (e.g., maintenance, insurance, subscriptions).
 - Hawthorne Utility Savings
 - \$17,996.74 (2024/25 SY)
 - Property and Liability reduction if the building is sold
 - \$15,000-\$17,000
 - Curricular Subscription Cost Savings
 - \$10,715.94
 - **Transportation / Busing:** The closure would require changes in transportation arrangements.
 - One bus (27) currently serves Hawthorne – Annual cost: **\$71,293.95**
 - The cost (on existing routes) to bus Hawthorne students who would attend Kessler is estimated to be: \$2,304.80
 - The cost (on existing routes) to bus Hawthorne students who would attend Central is estimated to be: \$1,388.77
 - Transportation savings: \$67,600.38
 - Overflow students returning to their neighborhood schools would likely ride on existing routes but this is yet to be finalized.
5. **The effect the school closure will have on district staffing, and on the costs of instruction, administration, transportation, and other support services.**
- **Employee Impact:** While 13.6075 FTE positions would be reduced, some staff could be reassigned within the district, particularly in positions where vacancies exist due to retirements, resignations, or other staffing changes.
 - Hawthorne Staff 24/25 School Year
 - 27 Employees
 - 20.32 FTE (Full Time Equivalent)
 - 2024/25 School Year Elementary District Staff Encumbered Expenses
 - \$1,361,749.78
 - Reductions
 - 6.7125 FTE Positions Retained at a cost of \$443,850.97

- 4 Teachers at 1.0 FTE each
 - IEFA Tutor at .15 FTE
 - 3 Paras at 0.8125 FTE to 0.875 FTE each
- 13.6075 Positions reduced for the 2025/26 school year for a savings of \$917,898.81
 - Positions/employees reduced will have opportunities across the district to fill vacancies per negotiated agreements and availabilities such as resignations, retirements, leave of absence, and current open positions.

6. **Student Safety:**

Central and Kessler elementary schools can safely accommodate our Hawthorne students.

7. **Such other facts as the Board deems necessary and appropriate in light of the circumstances.**

The most significant factors impacting this recommendation are declining enrollment, a school funding model that does not support small schools, and an aging building that cannot reasonably be expanded.

Other possible considerations that would reduce costs:

Remove all certified P.E. and Music teachers and require classroom teachers to teach music and P.E. as allowed by accreditation.

- This would result in a shorter school day to allow time for teacher preparation.
- Estimated savings if remaining K-5 P.E. teachers are eliminated – Savings \$497,373.90
- Estimated savings if remaining K-5 Music teachers are eliminated – Savings \$439,403.24

Remove all K-5 nurses and require remaining staff to fulfill nursing duties. No accreditation requirement for Nurses

- Eliminate all K-5 nurses – Savings \$471,558.54

- **Continue to reduce teaching staff across the district in the K-5 by maximizing class sizes and potentially increasing combination classes.**

Single Grade Rooms:

- Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 2: No more than 20 students.
- Grade 3 and Grade 4: No more than 28 students.
- Grade 5: No more than 30 students.

Multigrade Classrooms:

- Grades K, 1, 2, and 3: No more than 20 students.
- Grades 4, 5, and 6: No more than 24 students.

Note: State accreditation class size maximums allow for 4 students over the state standard with human resource support.

Enrollment: Over the years Hawthorne’s enrollment has been sustained by sending overflow students from the north valley. This is no longer the case and while there are still 50+ students attending Hawthorne from other school neighborhoods there are seats available for all students currently attending Hawthorne in two nearby schools - Central and Kessler.

Further, as noted, Department of Commerce demographics indicate this decline is not expected to change. High housing costs are impacting the ability of families with school-aged children to purchase homes in the city of Helena.

School Funding: Montana school funding is insufficient to sustain small elementary schools. Inflation has outpaced state allocations. The Montana School Boards Association estimates that inflation has left public schools short by \$141 million or 10% of their general fund budgets.

Montana's public schools are grappling with a combination of insufficient state funding, rising costs, and inequities stemming from reliance on local levies. This situation is prompting calls for reforms to the state's funding formula and increased investment in public education and the state legislature holds the keys to resolving the insufficient school funding formula. However, a solution to public school budget shortfalls is unlikely during the 2025 Legislative session.

The “writing on the wall” has been evident for some time.

- In 2022-2023 approximately \$1.7 million in reductions were made including the elimination of administrative, teaching, and support staff positions.
- In 2023-2024 approximately \$3.1 million in reductions included the closure of Ray Bjork Learning Center, a reduction in administrative, teaching and support staff positions, and a reduction in department and school budgets to name a few.
- In 2024-2025 approximately \$2.1 million in reductions included reducing teaching and administrative staff as well as cuts to multiple programs including music and P.E., PEAK gifted and talented, Access to Success and a reduction in department budgets.

Next Steps:

1. **Alternative Use or Sale:** Discussions on leasing or selling the property should continue, ensuring that any decisions align with the community's needs.

2. **Staffing Adjustments:** Communication with staff about potential reassignments or reductions will be crucial in the coming months.
3. **Transition Planning:** Communication with families and sites for transition planning during the remainder of the school year, this summer, and early fall.
 - a. Working with families to determine the best timing for them and their children
 - b. Providing flexibility in timing
4. **Final Decision:** The Board of Trustees can make a final decision during the regular June Board meeting.

In summary, the recommendation to close Hawthorne Elementary is based on a combination of factors to include declining enrollment, financial constraints, and the unsustainability of maintaining small schools under the current funding model.

While the closure would result in annual cost savings; the longer-term challenges lie in securing adequate funding to ensure a basic, free, quality public education for all students as required by the Montana State Constitution.

The Board of Trustees heard public comment regarding the information presented.

An individual wishing to remain anonymous submitted public comment to the Board of Trustees for tonight's meeting, addressing several key topics, including, but not limited to, the importance of education for all children. The individual, a former teacher, emphasized that Hawthorne is not the first school to face closure or transition, noting that in the past, overflow from schools such as Rossiter, Lincoln, and Broadwater was transferred to the newly established Four Georgians School. Additionally, Ray Bjork School and Lincoln School both closed in the past. While acknowledging that change is challenging, the individual remarked that it is sometimes a necessary process.

Ms. Chantel Schieffer emailed public comment to the Board of Trustees for tonight's meeting, addressing several key topics, including but not limited to, her concerns about the potential closure of Hawthorne School. Ms. Schieffer shared that her son, Dax, who has a rare genetic condition and autism, found a strong sense of community at Hawthorne. She requested that, if Hawthorne does close, families be given one year to process the change. Ms. Schieffer also emphasized the importance of considering the perspectives of neurodiverse students and involving Special Education teams in planning for the impacts across the district. She urged the board to slow down the decision-making process to allow for more thoughtful communication and support for affected families.

Ms. Shana Berry Brown, a parent and educator, emailed public comment to the Board of Trustees for tonight's meeting, addressing several key topics, including but not limited to, expressing support for Superintendent Weltz's proposal, including the closure of Hawthorne Elementary School. She explained that, due to the declining enrollment at Hawthorne, maintaining the school is not fiscally feasible. Ms. Berry Brown emphasized the importance of small class sizes, which enhance educational quality, and expressed that the closure would allow

resources to be better allocated to schools with larger student populations. She highlighted the broader impact on district services, such as P.E., music, and nursing, which could be reduced if Hawthorne remains open. She urged the community to support the district as a whole and to make decisions that ensure quality and equitable education for all students.

Ms. Amy Casne-Fetz, emailed public comment to the Board of Trustees for tonight's meeting, addressing several key topics, including but not limited to, her support for the closure of Hawthorne Elementary School. She shared her experience as a former teacher at Hawthorne (2003-2007), highlighting the school's unsafe conditions, such as structural damage from earthquakes. Ms. Casne-Fetz emphasized the importance of safety and, despite the emotional difficulty of closing a school, stressed that it is necessary given the district's financial struggles. She also noted that many teachers support the closure, believing it essential for the district's future. She concluded by expressing readiness to welcome Hawthorne's students to Central school in the fall.

Mr. Joe Donohoe, emailed public comment to the Board of Trustees for tonight's meeting, addressing several key topics, including but not limited to, concerns about a perceived disconnect between the community's core values and the district's financial decisions. He referenced a board member's statement implying that some groups, including Hawthorne, should share in the district's financial struggles. Drawing a parallel to ranchers who prioritize their land's sustainability over short-term financial solutions, Mr. Donohoe emphasized that the community values neighborhood schools and that closing them for budgetary reasons undermines this core belief. He expressed concern that the district may be prioritizing financial efficiency over these deeper values.

Mr. Chris Jones gave public comment. Mr. Jones is a Hawthorne parent. Mr. Jones' public comment addressed several key topics, including but not limited to, the ongoing budget crisis in the district. He highlighted the anticipated increase in class sizes and fewer staff members due to budget cuts, which will affect the entire district. Mr. Jones also noted that the decision to close Hawthorne is largely driven by financial constraints, particularly the impact of inflation on both the district's budget and local taxpayers. He expressed concern that the district may face difficulty passing levies and bonds this year, suggesting that the choice between closing Hawthorne or passing bonds will likely be a challenging decision, as both may not be feasible in the same year.

Mr. Josh Jones gave public comment. Mr. Jones is a Hawthorne parent and a Special Education Educator at Hawthorne. Mr. Jones' public comment addressed several key topics, including but not limited to, the positive impact of Hawthorne's close-knit community on student success. He highlighted that, unlike last year when there was one classroom clearance per week, this year there have been zero due to staff efforts. He also raised concerns about moving services from Hawthorne, noting the CSCT team's full caseload and waiting list. Mr. Jones stressed the importance of allowing adequate time for transitions, particularly if a closure decision is made at the end of the school year, as it would not provide enough time to prepare students and staff.

Mr. Gabriel Furshong gave public comment. Mr. Furshong is a former teacher in the district. Mr. Furshong's public comment addressed several key topics, including but not limited to, the

importance of considering demographic and financial trends in decision-making. He acknowledged the significance of individual opinions but emphasized that these trends cannot be ignored. He applauded the Board and Superintendent Weltz for addressing the difficult issue of school closures. Mr. Furshong referenced his participation in the Budget Consensus Committee, where school closures were discussed as a potential cost-saving measure and ranked as a top ten item. Additionally, he pointed to the 2023 district survey, where school closure was the second most popular option among nearly 500 respondents. Mr. Furshong expressed his support for making the difficult decision to close schools in order to ensure the district's financial stability.

Jack Tobin gave public comment. Jack Tobin is a sophomore at Capital High School. Jack's public comment addressed several key topics, including but not limited to, the potential closure of Hawthorne Elementary and its impact on the district's financial situation. He emphasized that the passing of bonds should take precedence over school closures, particularly due to concerns about overcrowding at Capital High if Helena High students are relocated. Jack also raised concerns about the mental health impact on students, particularly those in crucial social development stages, if they are split from their peers and sent to different schools. He urged the board to consider the well-being of students, as well as the short-term notice given for the potential closure of Hawthorne, which would impact his younger brother and his peers.

Mr. Doug Dellwo gave public comment. Mr. Dellwo's public comment addressed several key topics, including but not limited to, the failure to pass levies, resulting in financial strain, and questioned the cost of maintaining the Front Street property and busing, which he estimated at \$1,000,000 annually. He expressed his preference for Hawthorne to remain open, supporting neighborhood schools where children can walk and interact with local friends. He also criticized consolidating large student populations into one school, arguing it negatively impacts learning and student team dynamics.

Ms. Traci Swingley gave public comment. Ms. Swingley stated that she is here as a concerned citizen, parent, grandparent, and alumni. Ms. Swingley's public address addressed several key topics, including but not limited to, the importance of trust in public decision-making and the lack of transparency and collaboration in the proposed closure of Hawthorne. She emphasized the historic significance of Hawthorne, calling it more than just a school, but a cornerstone of Helena's civic and cultural identity. Ms. Swingley also criticized the artificial decline in enrollment due to district policies and questioned the focus on speculative maintenance over community partnerships or preservation funding. She urged the board to consider the human cost of displacing students, the breakdown of walkable communities, and the erosion of trust in public institutions, ultimately calling for a pause to explore alternatives to closure.

Ms. Lisa Richidt gave public comment. Ms. Richidt is a parent of three Hawthorne students. Ms. Richidt's public address addressed several key topics, including but not limited to, the increase in Hawthorne's enrollment since 2019, with the exception of the current year due to ongoing discussions about its closure. She questioned the projected \$900,000 savings from closing the school, asking how this would benefit the 3,200 other students, as it would not restore music, P.E., or extra programs. She highlighted the success of Hawthorne's special education program and split classrooms, arguing that larger schools are not always the solution. Ms. Richidt expressed concern that closing Hawthorne would not solve the district's financial issues and

would further erode trust in the public school district, urging the board to explore alternative solutions.

Ms. Camila Maloy gave public comment. Ms. Maloy is a parent of two children who previously attended Hawthorne Elementary School. Ms. Maloy's public address addressed several key topics, including but not limited to, the emotional impact of the school closure discussions on her children, particularly her child with special emotional needs, which led her family to pull their kids from Hawthorne. She emphasized the importance of transparency and clear communication from the board, as the uncertainty surrounding the closure deeply affected the children and community. Ms. Maloy also mentioned that other families had left the school due to similar emotional pressures and uncertainty.

Ms. Ann McCauley gave public comment. Ms. McCauley stated she is a Hawthorne parent and a proud public education supporter. Ms. McCauley's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, the timing of the Hawthorne closure recommendation and its emotional impact on the community. She compared the abruptness of the closure decision to Superintendent Wertz's earlier statement about gradual boundary adjustments, emphasizing that the current proposal does not allow enough time for students, staff, and families to process and adjust. Ms. McCauley highlighted the emotional difficulty of ending the school year with uncertainty and urged the board to reconsider the timing, allowing for additional planning and support for the affected community.

Mr. Joe Carroll gave public comment. Mr. Carroll's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, the potential long-term transportation costs associated with school closures. He expressed concern that while there may be short-term savings from closing a school, the ongoing transportation expenses for the district to transport students to distant schools would be a lasting financial burden. He also noted that some of these costs would be passed onto parents and the community but ultimately, the district would bear the majority of the new expenses.

Ms. Kyla Maki gave public comment. Ms. Maki is the parent of a 3rd grade Hawthorne student. Ms. Maki's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, the timing of the school closure decision. She expressed concern that making the decision to close Hawthorne in June leaves parents and students with little time to process and adjust to the change. She shared that her son has already been impacted by the uncertainty and is worried about the potential closure. Ms. Maki emphasized the importance of allowing families more time to make informed decisions and to emotionally prepare for such a significant change, particularly given the limited time frame and the confusion surrounding the information presented.

Ms. Hanna Warhank gave public comment. Ms. Warhank is the parent of a Hawthorne student. Ms. Warhank's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, urging the board to think beyond the three options presented by Superintendent Wertz regarding the closure of Hawthorne School. She suggested exploring alternatives such as relocating the growing Kindergarten Sprouts program to Hawthorne to address concerns about enrollment numbers. Ms. Warhank also emphasized the importance of reducing pressure on teachers with large class sizes and insufficient support staff by adjusting boundaries and redistributing

students. She called for innovative solutions that would benefit all students, including those at Hawthorne.

Ms. Beagan Wilcox Volz gave public comment. Ms. Wilcox Volz's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, her opposition to the closure of Hawthorne School, and the petition she co-drafted with Liz Grant, which has gathered 518 signatures. The petition highlights the importance of small schools in supporting children with learning disabilities, behavioral challenges, and unsupportive home environments, a need that has increased since the pandemic. Ms. Wilcox Bolz urged the board to explore alternative solutions, as closing Hawthorne would be a short-term fix without resolving the underlying, ongoing issues. She encouraged the board to collaborate in finding a more sustainable long-term solution.

Ms. Shana Berry-Brown gave public comment. Ms. Berry-Brown stated that she is here as a parent and an educator. Ms. Berry-Brown's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, her support for the proposed closure of Hawthorne Elementary School based on enrollment numbers, the financial practicality of keeping a school with a small student body, and the importance of making decisions for the broader benefit of the school district. She expressed her belief that while small schools like Hawthorne are valuable, the reality of maintaining a school with only 125 students cannot be ignored. Ms. Berry-Brown also emphasized her support for public education and the need for the district to focus on long-term sustainability, highlighting the differences between private and public schools in terms of class size and resources. She concluded by urging the community to unite behind the district's decisions and continue supporting the schools as a whole.

Ms. Erin Gallagher gave public comment. Ms. Gallagher's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, the importance of considering the timing of decisions related to the potential closure of Hawthorne Elementary and the need to address the root cause of the issue: funding from the state. She acknowledged the passion of Hawthorne parents and other members of the school district but emphasized the necessity of directing that energy toward advocating for better funding, which could potentially prevent school closures in the future. Ms. Gallagher also stressed the importance of balancing the district's budget while exploring alternative solutions, and she encouraged the community to think outside the box to address the broader challenges facing the school system.

Ms. Amanda Evans gave public comment. Ms. Evans is a Hawthorne parent and alumni. Ms. Evans' public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, the potential academic and social consequences of school closures driven by financial pressures. She stressed the importance of data-driven decision-making, noting that savings from closures are often overstated due to additional costs like transportation and renovations. Ms. Evans highlighted the impact on staff morale and the uncertainty of financial benefits from selling or leasing facilities. She urged the board to explore creative, cost-effective alternatives to closing neighborhood schools, particularly given current economic instability and potential federal funding cuts.

Mr. Dan Sullivan gave public comment. Mr. Sullivan attended Hawthorne Elementary School and has owned many houses in the Hawthorne neighborhood. Mr. Sullivan's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, the historical significance of

Hawthorne School to the community, its deep-rooted connection to local families, and the impact of the school's condition on the neighborhood's appeal. He shared a personal story illustrating the emotional attachment many people have to the school and expressed frustration over its current state. Mr. Sullivan also discussed how the condition of the school influences families' decisions to move into the area and the broader consequences of closing a school that has been a part of the community for generations.

Ms. Jennifer Bauer gave public comment. Ms. Bauer's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to the cost of transportation for Hawthorne students. She stated that the reported annual cost of \$71,293.95 for the bus serving Hawthorne is misleading. The bus in question picks up children from multiple areas, including Broadwater, 4G's, and Kessler, before reaching Hawthorne, where it only drops off eight students. Ms. Bauer emphasized that eliminating the bus would not result in significant savings, as the other students would still need transportation to school. She expressed concern about misinformation being spread through social media and the news regarding transportation costs.

Mr. Adam Clinch gave public comment. Mr. Clinch is a graduate of Hawthorne Elementary School. Mr. Clinch's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, his deep emotional connection to Hawthorne School. He expressed sadness and frustration over the potential closure of the school, emphasizing that Hawthorne represents more than just a school—it's a symbol of public education, community, and local roots. Mr. Clinch highlighted the broader issue of the national threat to public education, citing underfunding and the dismantling of schools piece by piece. He urged the community to channel their passion into advocating for public education, supporting local levies, and pushing for better funding and policies. Despite the possibility of Hawthorne's closure, he expressed hope that the fight for public education will continue and that the values represented by the school will live on.

Ms. Kristie Klein gave public comment. Ms. Klein is a Hawthorne parent and a Hawthorne employee. Ms. Klein's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, her support for Hawthorne Elementary, her positive experience as both a parent and employee, and her vision for the school's future. She expressed hope for Hawthorne's continued operation, suggesting it could become a community hub with programs like adult education. Ms. Klein urged the district to focus on investing in the school instead of prioritizing financial gains through land leases. She also stressed the urgent need for attention to Helena High, advocating for it to be a district priority. In conclusion, Ms. Klein urged the board to keep Hawthorne open and address the needs of Helena High.

Ms. Kathryn Dunkelberger gave public comment. Ms. Dunkelberger stated she is a parent, community member, taxpayer, and employee of Hawthorne. Ms. Dunkelberger's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, the impact of uncertainty surrounding Hawthorne's potential closure on enrollment. She shared her experience as a parent of twins at the school, noting that many families are leaving due to the ongoing threat of closure, while others are choosing not to enroll their children at all. Ms. Dunkelberger also highlighted the district's stifled growth and urged the board to consider the number of students in the school's boundaries who are attending other schools, particularly private institutions. She pointed out community developments like Westside and Kessler and the potential strain on

existing schools, stressing the need for planning to accommodate future growth.

Mr. Joe Naiman-Sessions gave public comment. Mr. Naiman-Sessions stated he is a parent of two Hawthorne students, one of whom receives special education services. Mr. Naiman-Sessions' public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, concerns regarding the potential impact of Hawthorne's closure on special education students. He emphasized the lack of clarity on special education resources at destination schools, particularly for students like his child who receives over nine hours of special education services per week. Mr. Naiman-Sessions questioned whether there would be adequate staffing and support for the increased caseload of special education students from Hawthorne if it were to close. He also raised concerns about the loss of trusted adults at Hawthorne and the negative effects of rushing the closure decision for the 2025-26 school year, suggesting that more time should be given to properly plan for the transition and avoid legal risks.

Mr. Jack Evans gave public comment. Mr. Evans' public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, the importance of neighborhood schools and his personal experience with Hawthorne. He emphasized how the school played a pivotal role in his life and the impact closing such schools could have on the community. While acknowledging the district's budget crisis, Mr. Evans questioned the reasoning behind closing Hawthorne or any neighborhood school. Drawing from his background in banking, he urged the trustees to critically evaluate the data and make decisions that ensure a sustainable future for the district, rather than focusing on short-term solutions.

Mr. Kellen Sullivan gave public comment. Mr. Sullivan stated that he was born and raised in Helena, and that he and his wife have a child starting kindergarten at Hawthorne in the fall. Mr. Sullivan's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, concerns about trust in the community regarding the Superintendent's recommendations, the prioritization of sports facilities over education, and the lack of transparency in the decision-making process. He expressed disappointment over the proposed closure of Hawthorne Elementary, noting that new subdivisions south of Kessler will add students, further straining the system. He also suggested that Hawthorne Elementary's enrollment would have increased if not for the constant threat of closure and advocated for alternative solutions instead of school closures.

Ms. Nikki Honzel gave public comment. Ms. Honzel is a Hawthorne alumna, and her daughter currently attends Hawthorne. Ms. Honzel's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, her disappointment with the proposed closure of Hawthorne and the unique benefits of small schools. As a Hawthorne alumna with a daughter currently attending, she expressed that the closure may not solve the budget issues and instead risks losing the strong community and individualized attention the school provides. She highlighted the protective factors and bonds formed at smaller schools, which contribute to fewer behavioral problems and a deeper connection between students and staff. Ms. Honzel urged the board to consider the long-term impact of closing Hawthorne and the loss to the community, stressing the importance of maintaining small schools to preserve those benefits.

Ms. Laura Holien gave public comment. Ms. Holien's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, the emotional impact of the proposed Hawthorne closure on

students and their friendships, as well as potential solutions to the district's budget concerns. She expressed concern about the emotional toll on the 130 Hawthorne students, highlighting the importance of keeping friendships intact. Ms. Holien urged the district to explore creative ways to reduce costs, such as increasing class sizes or renting out classrooms, and suggested surveying the community for ideas. She also pointed out that the community has already made sacrifices, like losing half a principal and a classroom, and emphasized the need for trust and involvement in finding a sustainable solution.

Ms. Rachael Howard gave public comment. Ms. Howard is the parent of three children in the district. Ms. Howard's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, concerns about the misleading implications of closing Hawthorne. She criticized the suggestion that the closure would reduce combination classes, sharing that her own children had negative experiences with them. Ms. Howard also pointed out the contradiction in claiming that closing the school would free up funds for programs, only to lose critical services like P.E., music, and other school resources. She highlighted the broader impact on the community, including disruptions for parents and the potential loss of enrollment in Helena Public Schools.

Ms. Hannah Cail gave public comment. Ms. Cail's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, concerns about the lack of transparency and long-term planning. She expressed frustration with the short notice of the decision to close Hawthorne, especially after parents had already signed their children up for kindergarten. Ms. Cail emphasized the difficulty of making an informed decision with incomplete and potentially inaccurate information. She called for a clearer, long-term financial plan and more creative solutions, urging the district to build trust by planning ahead and presenting options beyond the closure of Hawthorne.

Ms. Brenda Nordlund gave public comment. Ms. Nordlund is a former Helena Public Schools Trustee. Ms. Nordlund's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, the challenges of consolidation and the impact of ongoing funding issues. As a former trustee with experience overseeing school closures, she shared insights from her time on the board, noting that declining enrollment and consolidation were unavoidable due to long-term political and financial challenges. Ms. Nordlund acknowledged the difficult nature of these decisions but emphasized the necessity of finding savings, particularly in the face of stagnant funding. She urged the board to be thoughtful in their approach, ensure accurate numbers, and consider the improvements needed at Kessler.

Ms. Nancy Roth gave public comment. Ms. Roth is a long-time resident of the Hawthorne neighborhood. Ms. Roth's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, the potential impact of closing Hawthorne School on property values and the community. She highlighted a study she shared with the board that found closing schools typically leads to a decrease in property values by at least 10%. Ms. Roth calculated that this could result in a loss of approximately \$600 per home in the Hawthorne area, which could further exacerbate the district's financial challenges by reducing the local tax base. Additionally, she advocated for the excellent teachers at Hawthorne and emphasized the school's importance to the community, noting its walkability and the sense of connection it fosters among families.

Ms. Cheri Thornton gave public comment. Ms. Thornton is the parent of four children, two who are currently in Jefferson, and two who are slated to be kindergarteners. Ms. Thornton's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, her frustration with the district's messaging around the failed levy, which she felt misrepresented the vote's intent. She criticized the pitting of Hawthorne against other programs, calling it damaging to the community. Ms. Thornton highlighted the importance of Hawthorne to the neighborhood, describing it as the "heartbeat" of the community, and expressed concern over the impact of its closure and questioned the district's focus on low enrollment.

Ms. Sarah Christopherson gave public comment. Ms. Christopherson's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, her concerns about the closure of Hawthorne not being a solution to the district's budget problems. She criticized the message that closing Hawthorne would save music and P.E., as she believes those programs may still be cut. Ms. Christopherson also shared her perspective as a hopeful parent, eager to enroll her children at Hawthorne, and noted the difficulty of finding daycare in the area, suggesting that larger classes may be expected in the future. She emphasized that the value of Hawthorne extends beyond education, serving as the heart of the neighborhood and an important community asset.

Ms. Kathy Macefield gave public comment. Ms. Macefield's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, the financial challenges faced by the district, the potential for future school closures, and the impact of closing neighborhood schools. She acknowledged the district's budget issues but expressed concern that the closure of Hawthorne could set a precedent for additional closures, ultimately leading to the loss of community and neighborhood cohesion.

Ms. Jennifer Schaefer gave public comment. Ms. Schaefer is an educator in the district. Ms. Schaefer's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, the ongoing financial challenges faced by the district, the need for honest conversations about potential solutions, and the district's struggle to balance its budget. As a long-time teacher, Ms. Schaefer expressed appreciation for the superintendent, the school board, and the trustees' willingness to engage in difficult discussions, while acknowledging the necessity of making hard decisions to ensure the district's financial health and future growth.

Mr. Matt Volz gave public comment. Mr. Volz's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, the potential negative consequences of closing Hawthorne School, such as the loss of community trust and the acceleration of student enrollment decline district-wide. He emphasized the unique appeal of Helena's walkable neighborhood schools and warned that closing Hawthorne could make Helena less desirable. Mr. Volz urged the school board to explore alternative options and take more time to carefully consider all possibilities before making a decision.

Ms. Melissa Hornbein gave public comment. Ms. Hornbein's daughter previously attended Hawthorne and now is enrolled in the Montessori program at Central. Ms. Hornbein's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, concerns regarding the timing of Hawthorne's potential closure at the end of the school year. She emphasized that this decision leaves parents and the community in a difficult position with limited time to adjust. Ms.

Hornbein also noted that the budget issues at the district level reflect a larger statewide problem, highlighting the constitutional right of Montana children to a quality public education. She urged the board to explore all possible options for holding the legislature accountable to its constitutional obligations before making permanent closure decisions that serve as temporary solutions to recurring budget shortfalls.

Ms. Jesika Fisher gave public comment. Ms. Fisher is the principal at Hawthorne. Ms. Fisher's public comment addressed several key topics, including, but not limited to, expressing gratitude to the families and staff for their dedication to the students. She acknowledged the difficult and emotional nature of the situation, stating that no one is enjoying this process. She shared her deep connection to the Hawthorne community, highlighting the privilege of knowing each student by name and her commitment to ensuring a positive and supportive end to the school year, regardless of the outcome. Principal Fisher assured the community that, should the closure move forward, the Central and Kessler communities would offer their support, and she pledged to work throughout the summer to ensure a smooth transition for all involved.

V. BOARD/SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

The trustees and superintendent discussed the timing and process for a final decision on the potential closure of Hawthorne Elementary. They also addressed the district's financial challenges, and the broader funding issues affecting both the district and the state's education system. The trustees reaffirmed their commitment to public education and their ongoing advocacy for better state funding. They acknowledged the emotional impact of the situation on the community while expressing their dedication to supporting public education despite the difficult decisions ahead.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Siobhan Hathhorn adjourned the meeting at 9:22 p.m.

Candice Delvaux, Recording Secretary

Date

HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting

Item VI.B.1

Meeting Date: 5/13/2025

☐ Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

☐ Review of Agenda

☐ Recognitions

☐ Superintendent's Report

☐ General Public Comment

☐ Consent Action Items

☒ Items For Action

☐ Items For Information

☐ Reports

☐ Upcoming Meetings

☐ Board/Superintendent Comments

☐ Adjournment

Item Title: Item For Action
1. Approval of Energy Performance Contracting Board Resolution

Board Action	1st Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Other
Hathhorn					
McKee					
Robison					
Satre					
Hindoién					
Cleatus					
Walsh					
Armstrong					

ENERGY PERFORMANCE CONTRACTING RESOLUTION

At a regular meeting of the Helena Public Schools Board of Trustees held on May 13, 2025, the following resolution was introduced:

WHEREAS, the Helena Public Schools Board of Trustees has begun initial plans to make improvements to lighting, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC), indoor air quality (IAQ), temperature controls, as well other facility improvements that renew critical infrastructure, improve the learning environment, and/or reduce utility, operations and/or maintenance expenditures; and

WHEREAS, funding for this project will come from a variety of sources which may include loans repaid with guaranteed cost savings from reductions in utility, operations, and/or maintenance expenditures per [MCA 20-9-471](#), capital reserves, and other funding sources including any available grants or incentives; and

WHEREAS, the Trustees have determined that proceeding with an energy performance contract to complete this project is in the best interest of the District; and

WHEREAS, the Trustees anticipate that using an energy performance contract will meet procurement requirements as described in [MCA 20-9-204\(6\)](#); and

WHEREAS, the Trustees anticipate the energy performance contracting project procurement and implementation will be consistent with [MCA 90-4-11](#) and a copy of the request for proposals for energy performance contracting services is attached hereto and incorporated herein as if set forth in full.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Helena Public Schools Board of Trustees moved to adopt this resolution declaring their intent to request proposals for energy performance contracting services and enter into an agreement with a qualified energy service provider for the project as noted above at the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees.

ATTEST:

Janelle Mickelson
Business Manager/Clerk
Helena Public Schools

Siobhan Hathhorn
Board Chair
Helena Public Schools

HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting

Item VI.B.2

Meeting Date: 5/13/2025

☐ Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

☐ Review of Agenda

☐ Recognitions

☐ Superintendent's Report

☐ General Public Comment

☐ Consent Action Items

☒ Items For Action

☐ Items For Information

☐ Reports

☐ Upcoming Meetings

☐ Board/Superintendent Comments

☐ Adjournment

Item Title: Item For Action
2. Approval of HMS Exterior Painting Bid

Board Action	1st Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Other
Hathhorn					
McKee					
Robison					
Satre					
Hindoién					
Cleatus					
Walsh					
Armstrong					

Helena Public Schools – Facilities Office

**Todd J. Verrill**

Director of Facilities
1201 Boulder Ave.
Helena, MT 59601
(406) 324-1734
tverrill@helenaschools.org

Helena School District Board of Trustees

1325 Poplar St.
Helena, MT 59601-0939
boardoftrustees@helenaschools.org

13 May 2025

Dear Helena School District Board of Trustees,

I respectfully request the board of trustees award the Helena Middle School Exterior Restoration project to Witham Companies, LLC (Witham). Work for this project includes:

- Patch and repair damaged wall surfaces
- Prepare existing wall surfaces and apply new paint
- Paint metal railings and exterior doors
- Replace two small roofs
- Repair and/or replace concrete foundation, stairs, and curbs

The facilities office received two sealed bids and conducted a public opening on 9 May 2025. Witham submitted the lowest bid with a proposal of \$348,207.00, (see attached memos and bid tabulation worksheets). This proposal is well within the architect's opinion of probable cost for the project. Witham is a small company out of Townsend, and I am confident they will complete the project in a timely and professional manner.

Sincerely,

Todd J. Verrill

Attachments

- 1: Memo dated 9 May 2025: Award Recommendation
- 2: Bid Tabulation Worksheet



May 9, 2025

Helena School District No. 1
Helena Middle School Exterior Restoration – 25078.3
1201 Boulder Avenue
Helena, MT 59601

Subject: Helena Middle School Exterior Restoration Recommendation Letter

Dear Todd,

The Helena School District opened bids on Friday, May 9th, 2025, at 1:00 PM. Witham Companies emerged as the apparent low bidder with a bid of \$348,207. The project's estimated range of construction costs was between \$280,474 and \$547,790, including 10% contingency costs. Witham Companies is well within this estimated range of costs.

I contacted Austin Witham this afternoon to confirm their comfort with and commitment to the bid. Austin was comfortable with the project requirements and was excited to move forward. With this in mind, Slate Architecture recommends selecting Witham Companies as the contractor for this project.

Sincerely,

Slate Architecture™

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jacob Augenstein", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jacob Augenstein, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP^{BD+C}
Principal



Project No. : 24078.3

Project Name : Helena School District Helena Middle School Exterior Restoration

Date : May 9, 2025 @ 1:00 pm

Bid Tabulation Sheet

Company Name	10% Bid Security	Ack. All Addendums	Base Bid
DICK ANDERSON CONST.	YES	YES	\$485,000.00
WITHAM COMPANIES	YES	YES	\$348,207.00

HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting

Item VI.B.3

Meeting Date: 5/13/2025

☐ Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

☐ Review of Agenda

☐ Recognitions

☐ Superintendent's Report

☐ General Public Comment

☐ Consent Action Items

☒ Items For Action

☐ Items For Information

☐ Reports

☐ Upcoming Meetings

☐ Board/Superintendent Comments

☐ Adjournment

Item Title: Item For Action
3. Approval of Resolution Requesting County to Conduct 2026 Elections

Board Action	1st Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Other
Hathhorn					
McKee					
Robison					
Satre					
Hindoién					
Cleatus					
Walsh					
Armstrong					

Board of Trustees Meeting

Approval of Resolution Requesting County to Conduct 2026 Elections



VI. NEW BUSINESS

B. Items for Action

3. Approval of Resolution Requesting County to Conduct 2026 Elections

Background:

Pursuant to 20-20-417, MCA, the trustees of a district may request the county election administrator to conduct certain school elections during the ensuing school fiscal year. The request must be made by a resolution of the board of trustees. Whenever the county election administrator agrees to conduct a school election, the administrator shall perform the duties imposed on the trustees and the clerk of the district for school elections and deliver to the trustees, for the purpose of canvassing the vote, the certified tally sheets and other election items needed for canvassing the vote.

Considerations:

- The county election administrator has agreed to run elections scheduled for the regular election day, May 5, 2026.
- If a special election is requested, the county election administrator would want to find an agreeable date for the election and may refuse to run elections on a date that does not work for election office.
- The District must provide copies of all candidate filing forms and any ballot issue language by the candidate filing deadline.
- The county election office will run the election by district, not by precinct. Requests to run the election by precinct will not be accommodated.

Superintendent recommendation:

Approve the attached resolution requesting the county to conduct 2026 elections for Helena School District No. 1.

TRUSTEE RESOLUTION REQUESTING COUNTY CONDUCT ELECTION(S)

BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of Trustees for School District No. 1, Lewis and Clark County, State of Montana, requests that Lewis and Clark County, State of Montana, conduct the following school elections by mail ballot for School District No. 1, Lewis and Clark County for fiscal year 2026:

☒ All Elections

In accordance with 20-20-417, MCA, the county will perform the duties imposed on the trustees and the clerk of the district for school elections in 20-20-203, 20-20-313, and 20-20-401, and deliver to the trustees, for the purpose of canvassing the vote, the certified tally sheets and other items as provided in 13-15-301.

Other election duties not specified will be conducted by mutual agreement between the district clerk and the county election administrator.

Siobhan Hathhorn
Print Name of Board Chair

Signature of Board Chair

T. Janelle Mickelson
Print Name of Clerk

Signature of Clerk

DATED this _____ day of _____, 20__.

**Policy Background
Board of Trustees Work Session
May 13, 2025**

The following policies are being presented for Information:

5055 Leaves of Absence

The policy was revised to clarify language related sick leave and bereavement leaves that aren't covered by a collective bargaining agreement. Also, noted was a change from nonrefundable sick leave donations to refundable sick leave donations for any unused donation.

5085 Substitutes and Student Teachers / Interns

Revised policy to clarify how classified staff will be compensated when called upon to substitute for a teacher.

5051 Insurance Benefits for Employees

Employees desiring insurance coverage after the enrollment period can only do so as a result of a qualifying event. Medical examinations are no longer allowed for enrollment.

Policies Reviewed by the Policy Committee – No Changes

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 5005 | Sexual Harassment |
| 5025 | Employment and Assignment |
| 5051 | District Organization – Building Administrators and
District Administrative Personnel |
| 7090 | Use of Automated External Defibrillation |

HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting

Meeting Date: 5/13/2025

Item VI.C.1.

- ☐ Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance
- ☐ Review of Agenda
- ☐ Recognitions
- ☐ Superintendent's Report
- ☐ General Public Comment
- ☐ Consent Action Items
- ☐ Items For Action
- ☒ Items For Information
- ☐ Reports
- ☐ Upcoming Meetings
- ☐ Board/Superintendent Comments
- ☐ Adjournment

Item Title: Item For Information
1. Policy 5055: Leaves of Absence

PERSONNEL

Leaves of Absence

The District provides leave to its employees pursuant to Montana law, collective bargaining agreements and individual contracts. Those employees in paid leave status continue to accrue seniority and are eligible for District benefits. Employees in unpaid leave status do not accrue seniority and may not be eligible for benefits through the District.

Sick Leave

Certified employees will be granted sick leave according to terms of their collective bargaining agreement. Administrators shall be granted sick leave pursuant to the terms of their individual contracts. Classified employees shall be granted sick leave pursuant to Montana law governing public employees. Unless otherwise stated by contract, “sick leave” means a leave of absence, with pay, for an illness suffered by an employee or his or her immediate family, or death or funeral attendance of an immediate family member. “Immediate family” means the employee’s spouse, domestic partner, parents, siblings, children and like relations of the spouse or domestic partner. ~~A maximum of ten (10) days of accumulated sick leave may be used per year because of death in the immediate family~~

~~If the~~ The District has established, either through collective bargaining or through this policy, a sick leave fund, allowing employees ~~may~~ to contribute ~~any~~ a portion of the employee’s accumulated sick leave or accumulated vacation leave to a nonrefundable sick leave fund. ~~and become eligible~~ Approved recipients ~~to~~ may draw upon the fund pursuant to the rules established for the fund.

Bereavement Leave

Employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement will be granted bereavement leave according to the terms of their collective bargaining agreement. In addition to being permitted to use sick leave as bereavement leave, ~~Other~~ employees shall be allowed up to five (5) days of ~~bereavement~~ paid personal leave for deaths in the immediate family (employee’s spouse, domestic partner, parents, siblings, children, grandparent, grandchild and like relations of the spouse or domestic partner). In the event the employee needs additional ~~bereavement~~ personal leave time, an additional leave of up to five (5) days may be awarded at the discretion of their immediate supervisor. One (1) day of ~~bereavement~~ personal leave may be granted to allow an employee to attend a funeral of a family member who does not meet the criteria of “immediate family”. ~~Any leave categorized as bereavement leave shall be without loss of pay.~~

Personal and Emergency Leave

Certified employees will be granted personal and emergency leave according to the terms of their collective bargaining agreement. Administrators will be granted personal and emergency leave pursuant to the terms of their individual contracts, or at the discretion of the

Superintendent. Classified staff may be granted personal and emergency leave pursuant to the terms and conditions stated in their collective bargaining agreement or current classified staff handbook. Personal and emergency leave is without pay unless otherwise stated in the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

Civic Duties Leave

Employees shall be granted leave (with or without pay) for service on a jury, holding public office, or in response to a subpoena, in accordance with state law. The District will notify employees who were granted paid leave of any reimbursement requirements in the employee handbook.

Military Leave

Employees shall be granted leave for service in the military in accordance with state and federal law. The District will comply with all federal and state regulations regarding the employee's return to service following military leave.

Vacation Leave

Administrators will be granted vacation leave pursuant to the terms of their individual contracts and Montana law. Classified employees will be granted vacation leave pursuant to Montana law. The District, in its sole discretion and/or subject to the terms of the collective bargaining agreement, may provide cash compensation for unused vacation leave in lieu of the accumulation of vacation leave.

Legal References:	§ 2-18-601, MCA	Definitions
	§ 2-18-611, MCA	Annual vacation leave
	§ 2-18-617, MCA	Accumulation of leave -- cash for unused -- transfer
	§ 2-18-618, MCA	Sick Leave
	§ 2-18-619, MCA	Jury duty – service as witness
	§ 2-18-620, MCA	Mandatory leave for employees holding public office – return requirements

2-18-620. Repealed. Sec. 3, Ch. 185, L. 2009.

History: En. 59-1011, 59-1012 by Secs. 1, 2, Ch. 107, L. 1975; R.C.M. 1947, 59-1011, 59-1012; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 57, L. 1979; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 692, L. 1991.

~~2.21.222, ARM – Calculating Annual Vacation Leave Credits~~

Rule 2.21.222 - CALCULATING ANNUAL VACATION LEAVE CREDITS (REPEALED)

Cross References:

Policy History:

Adopted on: 9.8.2015

Revised on

1.7.2025 Policy Committee – 1st Review
2.4.2025 Policy Committee – 2nd Review
3.4.2025 Policy Committee – 3rd Review

5.5.2025 Policy Committee – 4th Reading
5.13.2025 Full Board – 1st Reading

HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting

Meeting Date: 5/13/2025

Item VI.C.2.

☐ Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

☐ Review of Agenda

☐ Recognitions

☐ Superintendent's Report

☐ General Public Comment

☐ Consent Action Items

☐ Items For Action

☒ Items For Information

☐ Reports

☐ Upcoming Meetings

☐ Board/Superintendent Comments

☐ Adjournment

Item Title: **Item For Information**
2. Policy 5085: Substitutes and Student Teachers/Interns

PERSONNEL

Substitutes and Student Teachers/Interns

Under certain circumstances, individuals other than the District-employed teaching staff may be providing instruction to students in a classroom setting. The Board authorizes the use of substitute teachers as necessary to replace teachers who are temporarily absent. The District shall arrange for the substitute to work for the absent teacher. Under no condition is a teacher to select or arrange for a private substitute. All substitute teachers will be required to undergo fingerprint and background checks prior to being placed in a classroom. The Board establishes a daily rate of pay for substitute teachers. No fringe benefits are given to substitute teachers.

Substitutes for classified positions will be paid by the hour.

When a classified employee is called upon to substitute for a teacher, the teacher sub rate shall apply unless the classified rate of pay is higher.

The District shall make an effort to cooperate with accredited institutions of higher learning in the education of student teachers and other professionals in training (such as interns) by providing a reasonable number of classroom and other real life situations each year. The District and the respective training institutions shall enter into mutually satisfactory agreements whereby the rules, regulations and guidelines of the practical experiences shall be established.

The Superintendent shall coordinate all requests from cooperating institutions for placement with building principals so that excessive concentrations of student teachers and interns shall be avoided.

References:	10.55.707, ARM	Teacher and Specialist Licensure
	10.55.716, ARM	Substitutes
	§20-4-101, MCA	System and definitions of teacher and specialist certification – student teacher exception

Cross References:

Policy History:

Adopted on: 8.13.2013

Revised on:

HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting

Meeting Date: 5/13/2025

Item VI.C.3.

☐ Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

☐ Review of Agenda

☐ Recognitions

☐ Superintendent's Report

☐ General Public Comment

☐ Consent Action Items

☐ Items For Action

☒ Items For Information

☐ Reports

☐ Upcoming Meetings

☐ Board/Superintendent Comments

☐ Adjournment

Item Title: **Item For Information**
3. Policy 5051: Insurance Benefits for Employees

2
3 PERSONNEL

4
5 Insurance Benefits for Employees

6
7 Certified and classified employees whose employment is governed by the terms of a collective bargaining
8 agreement are eligible for insurance benefits offered by the District as stated in the applicable current
9 collective bargaining agreement. Other employees will be offered insurance benefits consistent with the
10 District's cafeteria benefit plan.

11
12 ~~A medical examination at the expense of the employee may be required, if the employee elects to join the~~
13 ~~District health insurance program after initially refusing coverage during the open enrollment period as~~
14 ~~defined in the plan documents. Any employee who desires coverage through the District after the~~
15 ~~enrollment period deadline can only do so through a qualifying event.~~ An eligible employee wishing to
16 initiate, discontinue or change health insurance coverage must initiate the action by contacting the Human
17 Resources office and completing appropriate forms.

18
19
20
21 Legal References: § 2-18-702, MCA Group insurance for public employees and officers
22 § 2-18-703, MCA Contributions

23
24
25 Cross References:

26
27 Policy History:

28 Adopted on: 6.14.2016
29 Revised on: 3.14.2023

HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting

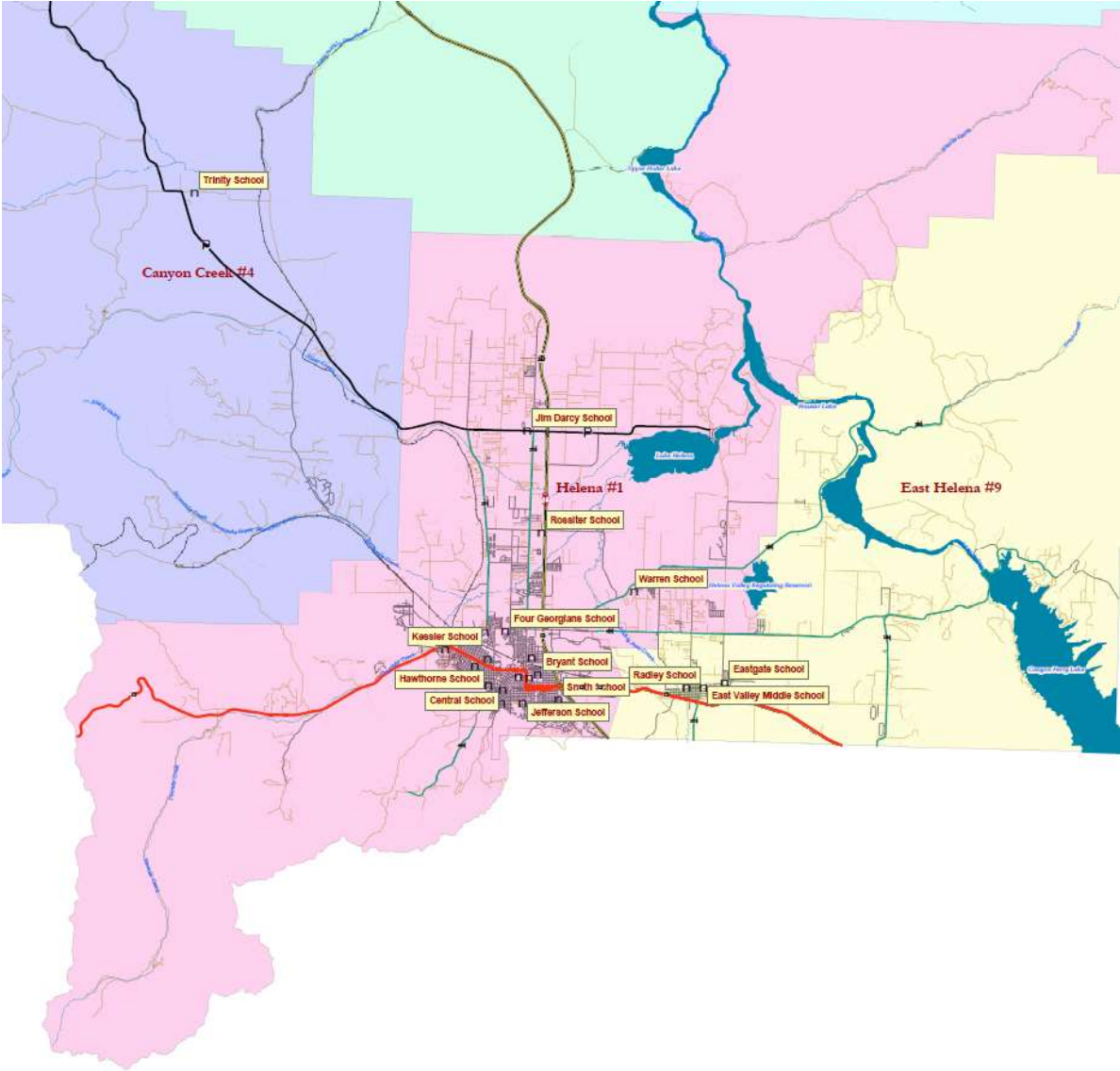
Meeting Date: 5/13/2025

Item VI.C.4.

- ☐ Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance
- ☐ Review of Agenda
- ☐ Recognitions
- ☐ Superintendent's Report
- ☐ General Public Comment
- ☐ Consent Action Items
- ☐ Items For Action
- ☒ Items For Information
- ☐ Reports
- ☐ Upcoming Meetings
- ☐ Board/Superintendent Comments
- ☐ Adjournment

Item Title: Item For Information
4. Boundary Recommendations Update

Map of School Districts surrounding Helena (Helena Public Schools in pink)



The Why? The How? The What? and The When?

Changing the East/West Boundary Line will balance Middle School and High School enrollments.

The reason to make the shift is to ensure equal student educational opportunities remain an option of each high school and middle school. If we do not change, students on one side of town will have more class opportunities than on the other side of town. Also, if we travel our program staff to different sites, we lose time with them, when they could be working with students. Our budget challenges and human resource constraints require us to maximize the use of our resources to ensure equal educational opportunities exist for all students in our schools.

The East/West Line needs to shift from East to West to balance the High School and Middle School enrollments to maintain equal opportunities in those schools.

Gradual Transition, this won't start right away. Begins for the 2026-2027 school year.

Students may choose to stay in the school they are currently in. This is a change in transportation routes. Another example is that the current 2024-2025 5th graders will attend the middle school they were planning to.

Sibling Rule: Families with children may follow their sibling in school attendance areas if they choose, parents will need to transport or utilize a courtesy route.

Transportation Changes will occur at the beginning of 2026-2027. Students will be able to use in-district courtesy transportation routes if families choose to stay at their current school. These are regional type stops. Courtesy routes are the concept where an in-district resident student may board an existing route.

The In-District Boundary Exception process has been in place for many years, it will continue.

The projection of school age children population in Lewis and Clark County in the next 20 years is relatively not changing according to the State Department of Commerce. (not growing, not declining).

Continued regular boundary maintenance is suggested for our district. (Every 7 to 10 years or more often)

Trend for Lewis and Clark County: 5 year olds: through Year 2040

Population Projection Regional Economic Models Incorporated (REMI)

2021
data vintage year



Trend

Age Pyramid

Change Map

Table

Population Projection - Trends

Adjust the figures below by selecting a custom age range, gender and race. Select one or more counties to display in the county figures.

Select State and Counties: 5

Lewis and Clark

Select Age Range

5 5

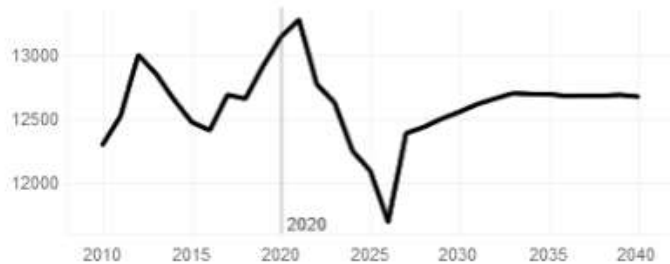
Select Genders

(All)

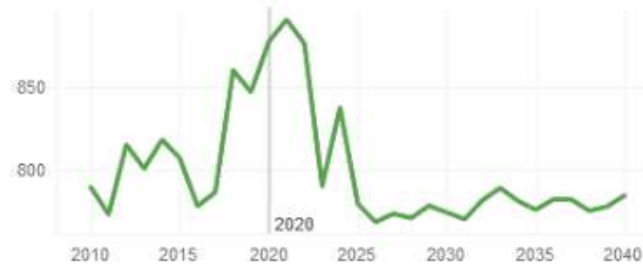
Select Races

(All)

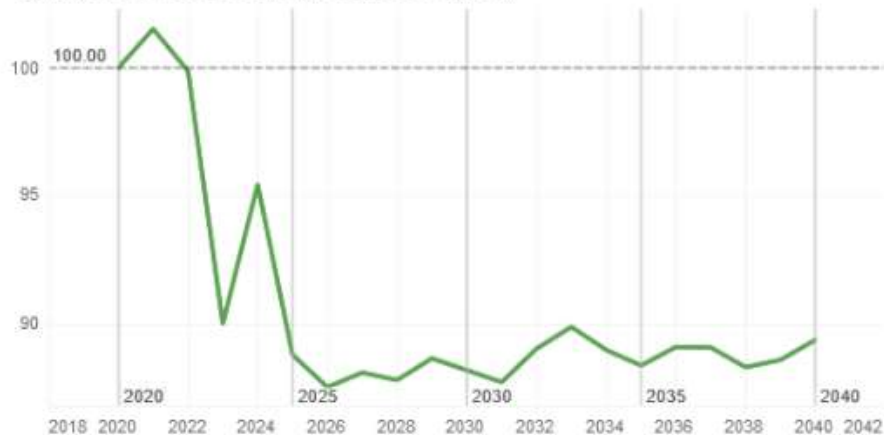
Projected Population Total for State of Montana



Projected Population Total for Selected Counties



Change in Projected Population from 2020 (index)

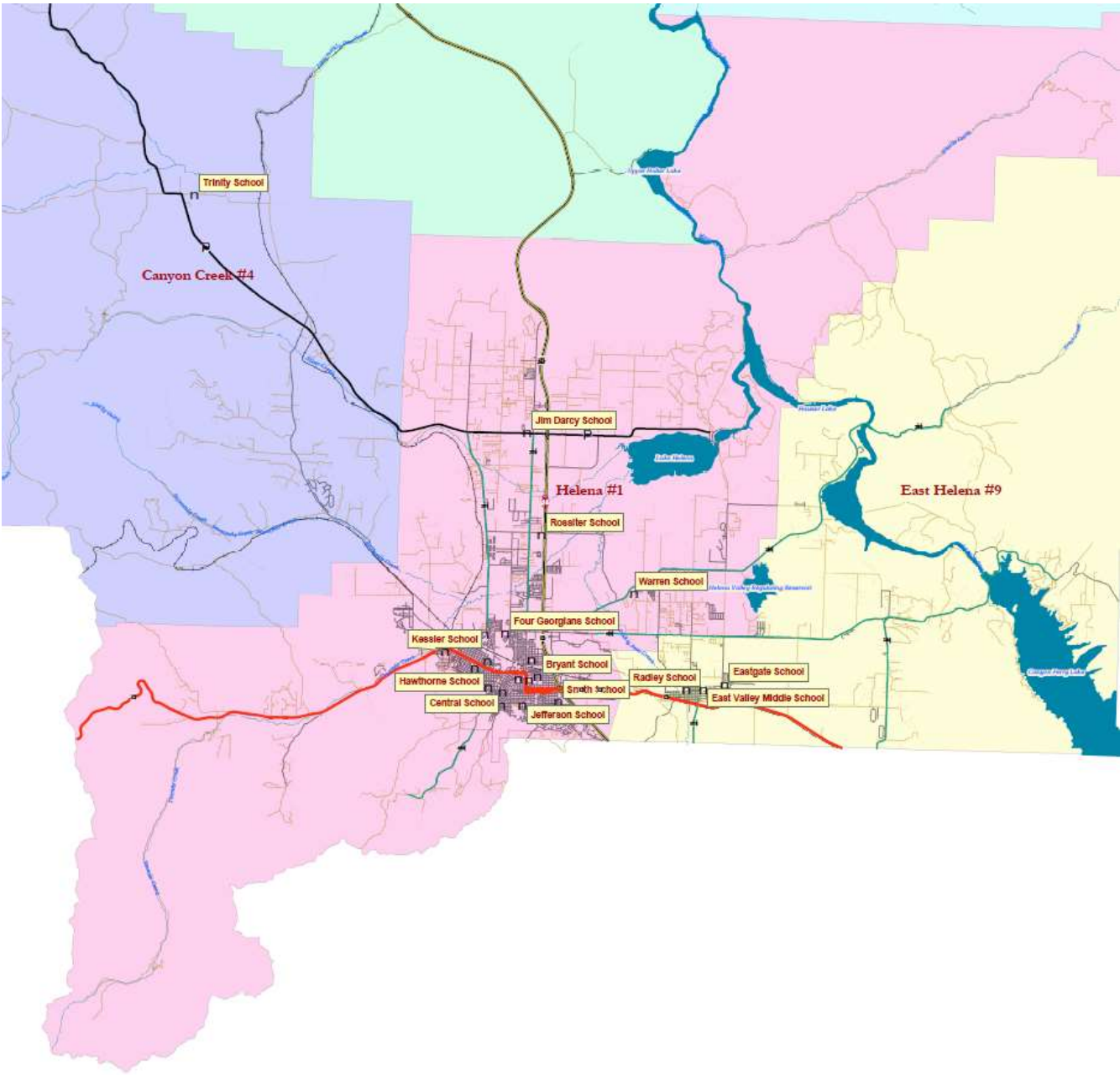


Projected population change is indexed to the data release year of 2020. Indexing the rate of change enables the comparison of data with different magnitudes.

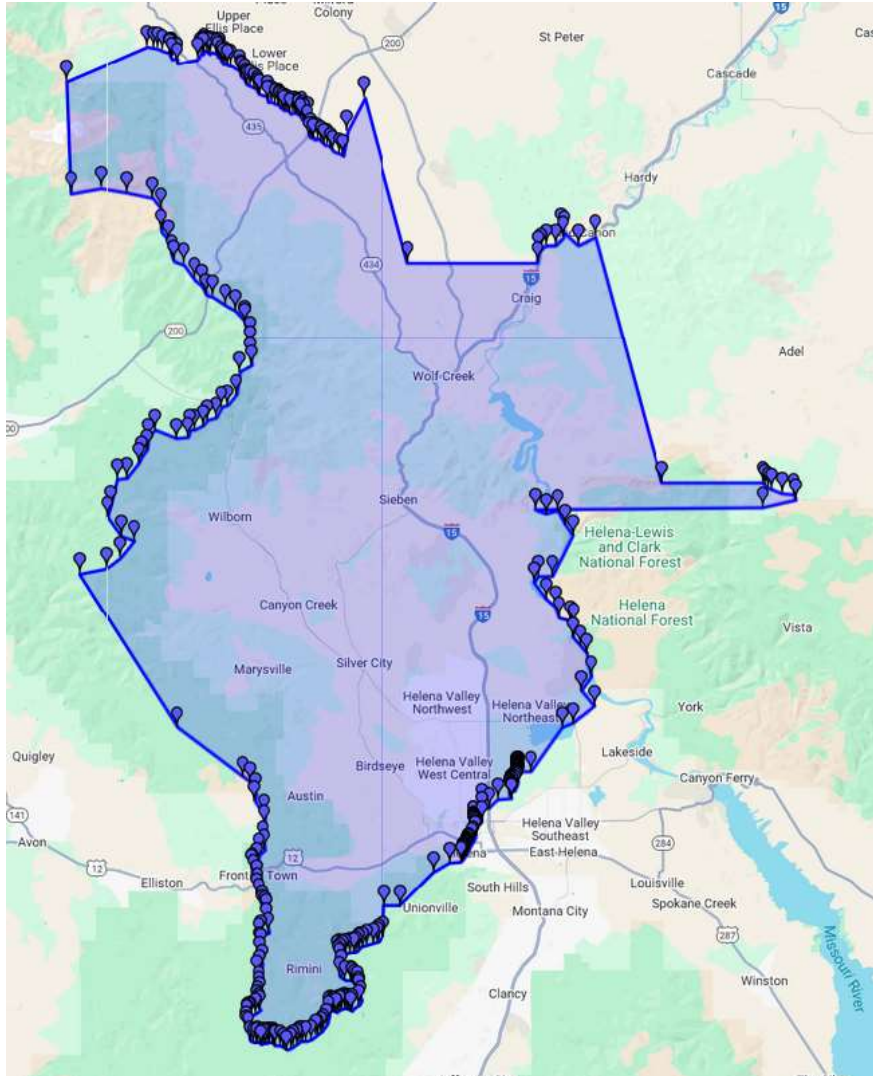
Lewis and Clark

Data Source: eRemi Montana State and County Population Projection by Gender, Race and Age from Regional Economic Models Incorporated (REMI) compiled by Montana Department of Commerce.

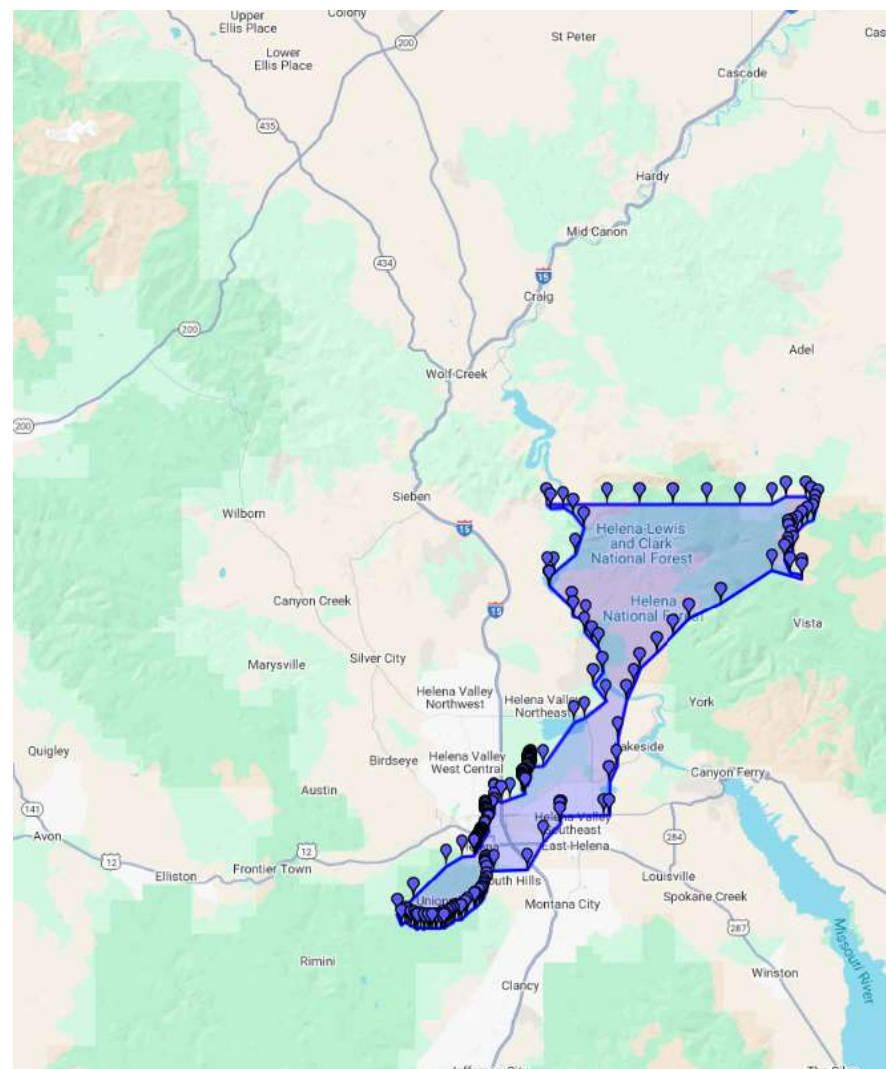
Map of School Districts surrounding Helena



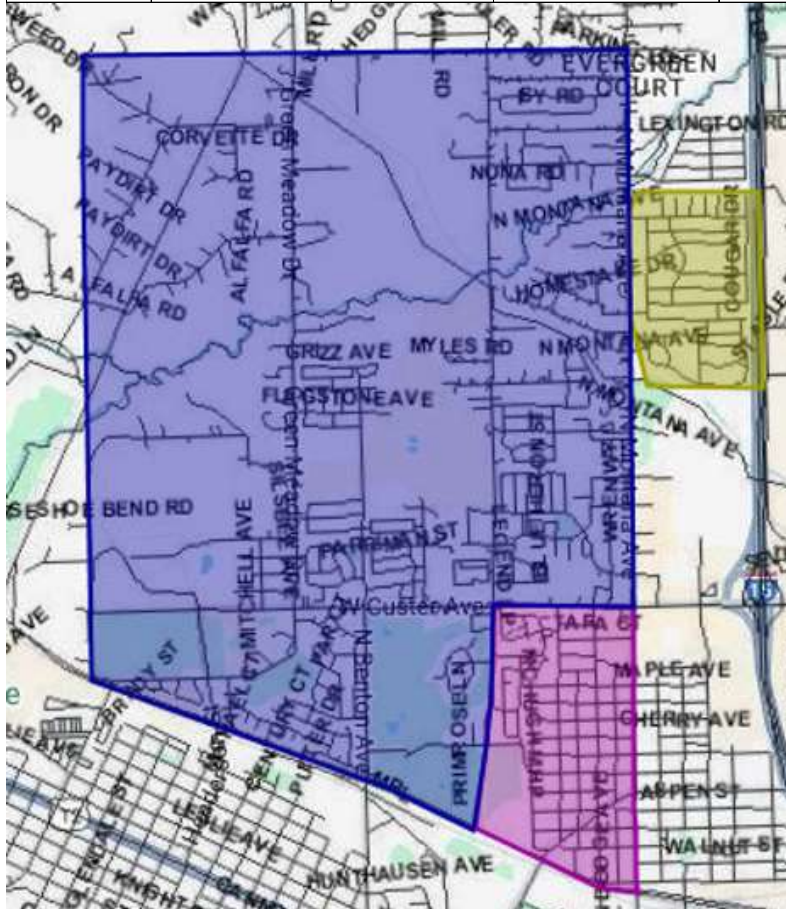
Current CHS Boundary (Larger Image and Region)



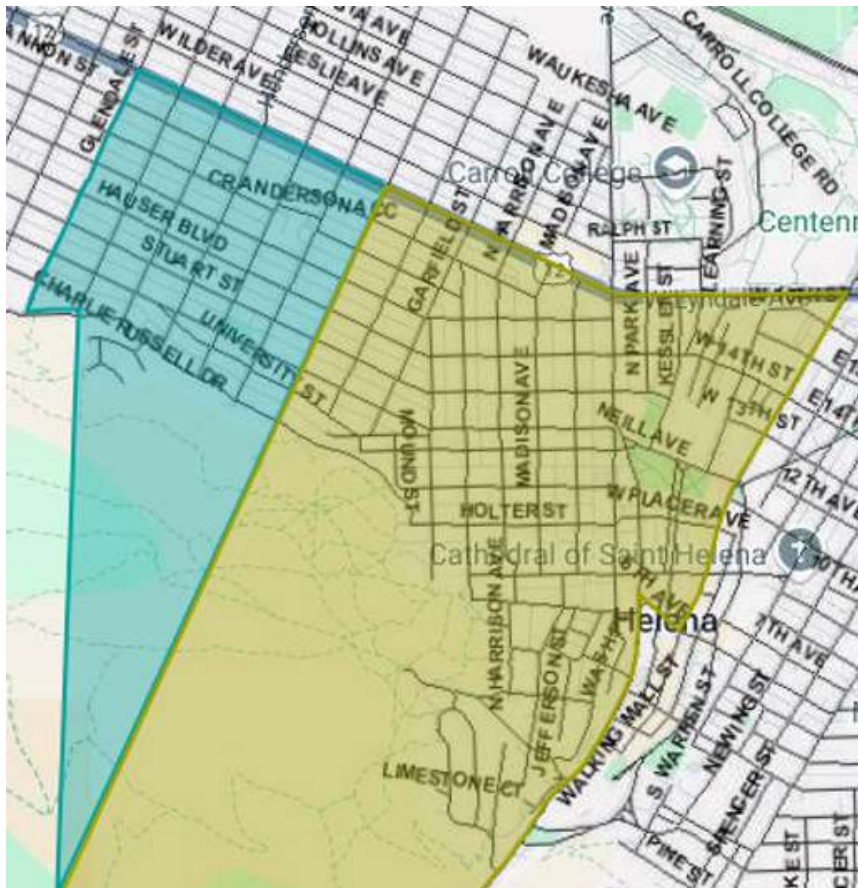
Current HHS Boundary (Smaller Image and Region)



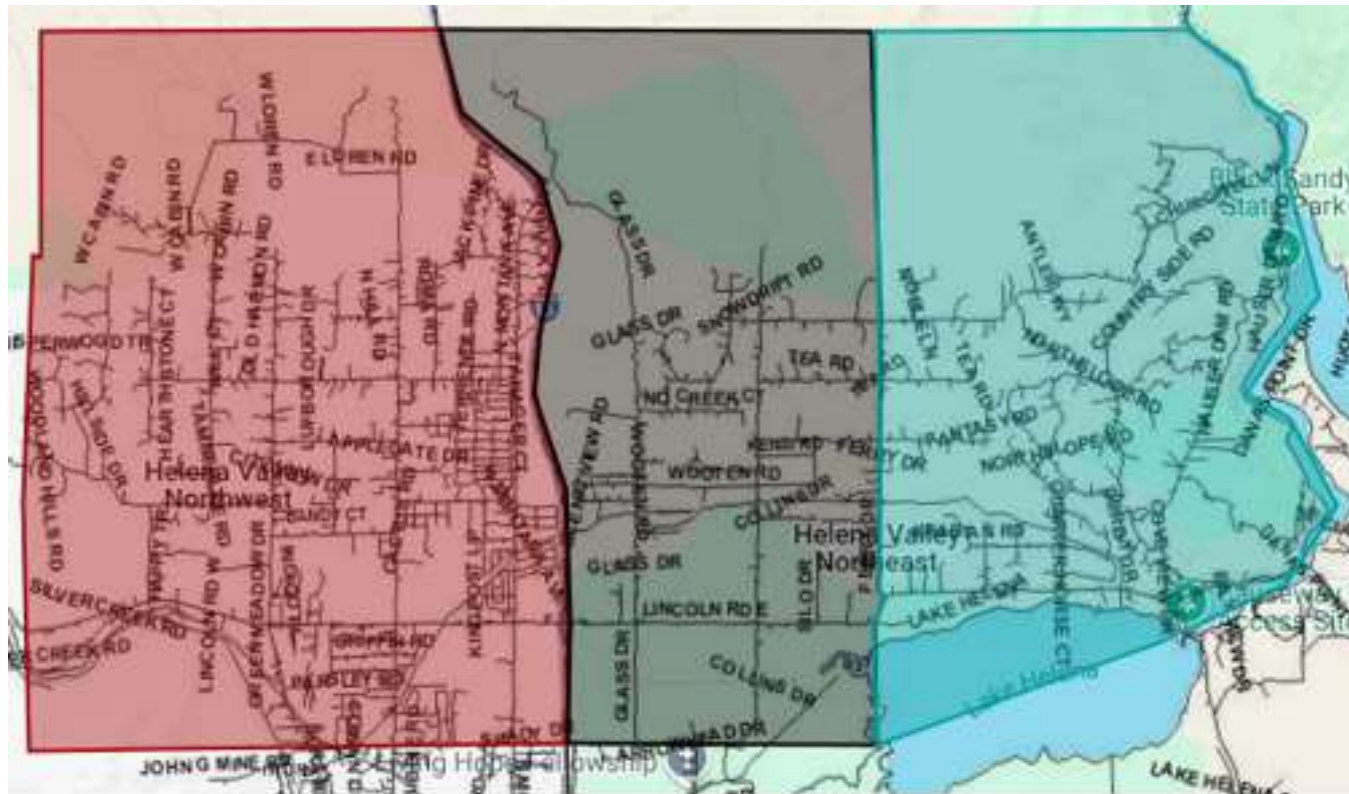
Boundary Adjustment	Area	Current	Change	Change Type	Further Description of Change	Why	How	When
1	Treasure State Addresses	Currently attends Four Georgians, CRA, CHS	Change Elementary School to Rossiter, maintain attendance to CRA, CHS	Change Elementary School, keep same MS and HS	Treasure State Acres Neighborhood changes k-5 student attendance changes from Four Georgians to Rossiter, these students will continue to attend the CRA/CHS pattern	Rossiter enrollment is declining and Four Georgians is growing	Currently 70 students live in this area, effectively adds 12 students per grade to Rossiter, frees up the Four Georgians neighborhood near the school to take its enrollment rather than to overflow them to Broadwater	Begins with enrolling Kindergarteners for 2026-2027
2	Tree Street Addresses	Currently attends Four Georgians, then either CRA or HMS, either CHS or HHS	Change to HMS and HHS, maintain Four Georgians	Has been an optional split to MS and HS, Change is to require the ES to split into HMS and CRA with HHS and CHS	After grade 5 at Four Georgians, Tree Street Neighborhood, will attend HMS and HHS. The dividing line will be McHugh Lane. West to CRA, East to HMS.	Assists in reducing enrollment at CRA and CHS, growing the enrollment at HMS and HHS	Currently 30 Middle School students will attend HMS and 40 High School students live in this neighborhood and will attend HHS.	Begins with Transition to 6th Grade for HMS for 2026-2027



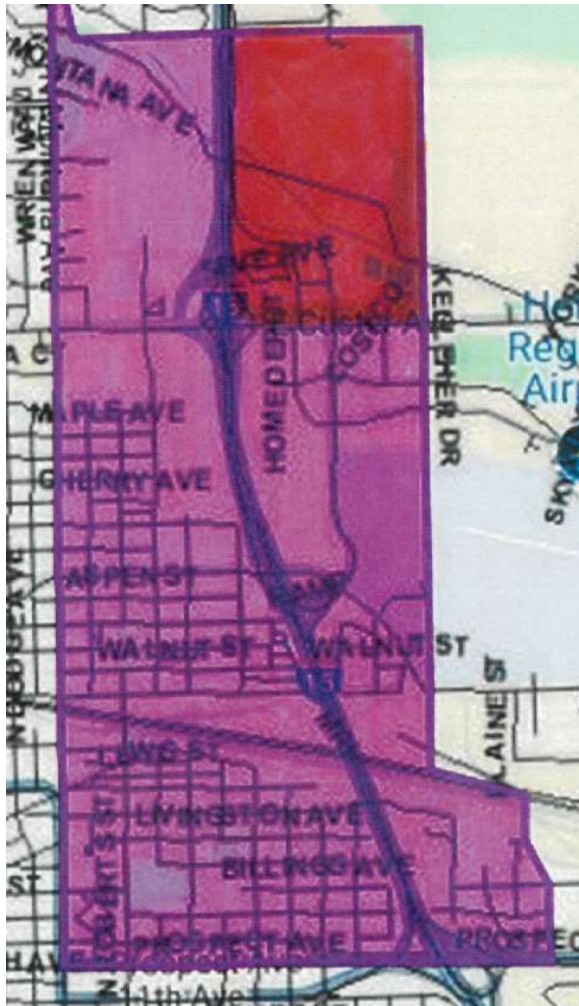
Boundary Adjustment	Area	Current	Change	Change Type	Further Description of Change	Why	How	When
3	North and East Mount Helena Addresses, South of Euclid	Currently attends Hawthorne, CRA, CHS	Using Grant Street as the East/West Line. The East side would change to attend HMS/HHS. The West side would change to attend CRA/CHS. If Hawthorne closed, this line would be used to split students to Kessler and Central.	Change is to require the ES to split into HMS and CRA with HHS and CHS	After grade 5, students will split their 6-8 attendance and 9-12 attendance area. The dividing line will be Grant Street. West to CRA/CHS, East to HMS/HHS.	Assists in reducing enrollment at CRA and CHS, growing the enrollment at HMS and HHS	Using Grant Street as a line, the West side will go to CRA/CHS and the East side will go to HMS/HHS. 48 students would change to attend HMS. 64 students would change to attend HHS.	Begins with Transition to 6th Grade for HMS for 2026-2027, if closed Kessler and Central will be utilized earlier



Boundary Adjustment	Area	Current	Change	Change Type	Further Description of Change	Why	How	When
4	North of Lincoln Road and East of Ferry Drive	Currently attends, Jim Darcy, CRA, CHS	Change to Warren, HMS, HHS	Change Elementary School, Change MS and HS	k-5 students instead of attending Jim Darcy, these students will attend Warren, HMS then HHS	Assists in reducing the enrollment at Jim Darcy, CRA and CHS. Increases the enrollment at Warren, HMS, HHS.	Using Ferry Drive North of Lincoln Road as a line. The West side will continue to attend Jim Darcy, CRA, CHS. The East side will attend Warren (48 students), HMS (12 students), HHS (32 students)	Begins with K enrollment for 2026-2027 for Warren, Begins with Transition to 6th Grade for HMS for 2026-2027



Boundary Adjustment	Area	Current	Change	Change Type	Further Description of Change	Why	How	When
5	North of Custer Ave, East of I-15 (South of Pleasant Valley Subdivision, this is the new housing North of Super 1 Foods)	Currently Bryant attendance Area, then HMS, HHS	Change to Rossiter, maintain HMS, HHS	Change to attend new Elementary, keep the original MS and HS which means its now a split	Change K-5 to attend Rossiter instead of Bryant, this was formerly a Bryant/HMS/HHS attendance area. These students will attend Rossiter, then attend HMS/HHS. After grade 5, these students will spilt from Rossiter and attend HMS/HHS.	Makes sense with location of this subdivision	3 students currently live in this neighborhood.	Begins with K enrollment for 2026-2027



Fall Enrollment Building Totals 10/7/2024	Adjustments occurring over time with these Boundary Adjustments	New Totals with these Boundary Adjustments over time
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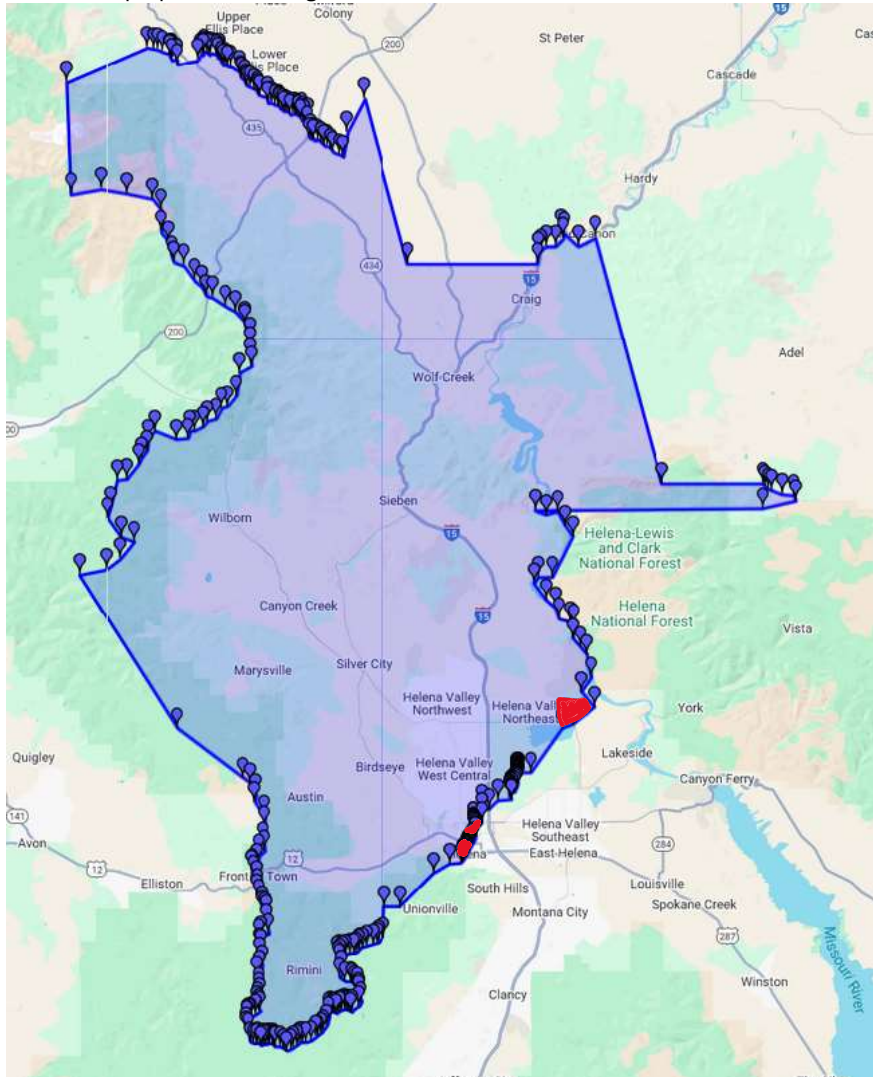
Broadwater	267	0	267
Bryant	282	-3	279
Central	316	0	316
Four Georgians	469	-70	399
Hawthorne	181	0	181
Jefferson	243	0	243
Jim Darcy	468	-48	420
Kessler	235	0	235
Rossiter	367	73	440
Smith	276	0	276
Warren	274	48	322

C.R. Anderson	968	-90	878
Helena Middle	705	90	795

Capital	1307	-136	1171
Helena High	986	136	1122

Proposed change to CHS (CRA) Boundary

Red area is proposed to change from West to East

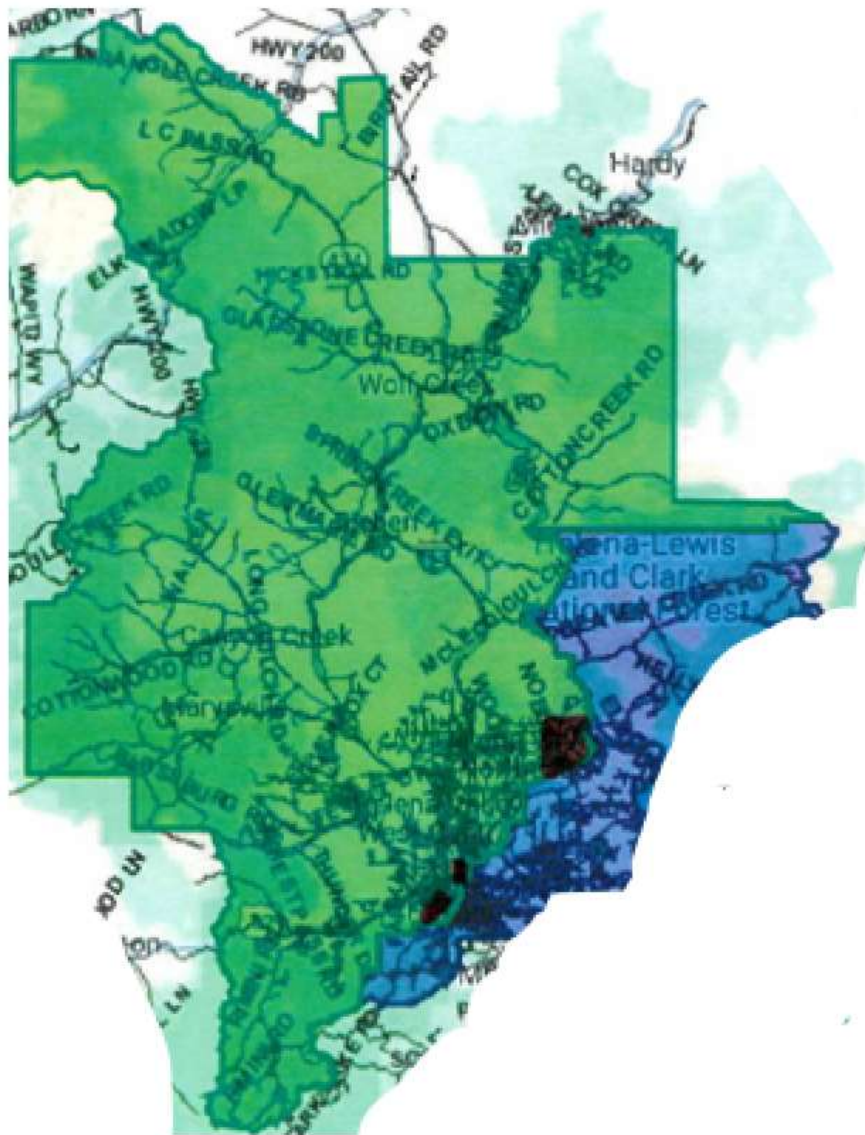


Proposed Change to HHS (HMS) Boundary

Green area is proposed to change from West to East



MAP of the CHS and HHS boundaries combined, the red portion is the new proposed area to move from West to East



The Why? The How? The What? and The When?

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Continued regular boundary maintenance is suggested for our district. (Every 7 to 10 years or more often)

HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting

Meeting Date: 5/13/2025

Item VI.D.1.-D.10

- ☐ Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance
- ☐ Review of Agenda
- ☐ Recognitions
- ☐ Superintendent's Report
- ☐ General Public Comment
- ☐ Consent Action Items
- ☐ Items For Action
- ☐ Items For Information
- ☒ Reports
- ☐ Upcoming Meetings
- ☐ Board/Superintendent Comments
- ☐ Adjournment

- Item Title:** **Reports**
- 1. Student Representatives Report
 - 2. Helena Education Association Report
 - 3. Facilities & Technology Committee Report
 - 4. Budget & Finance Committee Report
 - 5. Teaching & Learning Committee Report
 - 6. Policy Committee Report
 - 7. Health Benefits Committee Report
 - 8. Wellness Committee Report
 - 9. Montana School Boards Association Report
 - 10. Parent Council Visit Report

HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting

Item VII.

Meeting Date: 5/13/2025

☐ Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

☐ Review of Agenda

☐ Recognitions

☐ Superintendent's Report

☐ General Public Comment

☐ Consent Action Items

☐ Items For Action

☐ Items For Information

☐ Reports

☒ Upcoming Meetings

☐ Board/Superintendent Comments

☐ Adjournment

Item Title: Upcoming Meetings

HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting

Item VIII.

Meeting Date: 5/13/2025

☐ Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

☐ Review of Agenda

☐ Recognitions

☐ Superintendent's Report

☐ General Public Comment

☐ Consent Action Items

☐ Items For Action

☐ Items For Information

☐ Reports

☐ Upcoming Meetings

☒ Board/Superintendent Comments

☐ Adjournment

Item Title: Board/Superintendent Comments

HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting

Item VIII.

Meeting Date: 5/13/2025

☐ Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

☐ Review of Agenda

☐ Recognitions

☐ Superintendent's Report

☐ General Public Comment

☐ Consent Action Items

☐ Items For Action

☐ Items For Information

☐ Reports

☐ Upcoming Meetings

☐ Board/Superintendent Comments

☒ Adjournment

Item Title: Adjournment