Superintendent
Rex Weltz
324-2001

Business Manager
Janelle Mickelson
324-2040

Board of Trustees Special Board Meeting

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

Wednesday, September 24th, 2025

5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE – Present unless otherwise noted.

Jennifer McKee, Chair
Jennifer Walsh, Vice Chair
Kay Satre, Trustee
Siobhan Hathhorn, Trustee
Jenny Murnane Butcher, Trustee
Linda Cleatus, Trustee
Brock Gardipee, Helena High School Student Representative for the Board of Trustees
Delaney Lynch, Capital High School Student Representative for the Board of Trustees
Rex Weltz, Superintendent
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Janelle Mickelson, Business Director
Todd Verrill, Facilities Director
Gary Myers, Director of Educational Technology
Kaitlyn Hess, Data & Federal Programs Director
Justine Alberts, Assistant Superintendent PreK-5
Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director
Taylor Lassiter, Communications Specialist
Jane Shawn, HEA President
Shane Swandal, Hulteng CCM, Inc.
Alec Pinero, Hulteng CCM, Inc.
Dan Semmens, Partner, Dorsey & Whitney LLP
Bridget Ekstrom, Managing Director, Public Finance Banker, D.A. Davidson & Co.
Many guests of the public as well as Helena School District Staff

I. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board Chair Jennifer McKee called the meeting to order at 5:31 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 a sabbatical presentation given by Mr. James Irby.

III. SABBATICAL PRESENTATION-Mr. James Irby

In 2024-2025 the Board of Trustees approved one sabbatical for Mr. James Irby. Beginning this year all sabbatical recipients will make a brief presentation to the Board at the conclusion of their sabbatical. Below is a summary of Mr. Irby's sabbatical proposal.

Mr. Irby proposed a semester sabbatical to conduct the research necessary to complete his doctoral dissertation in Literature and Criticism at Indiana University in Pennsylvania. His dissertation focuses on how the contributions of 1980s anthropomorphic comics from independent publishers benefit society. This is a fairly new field of study and James believes there is literary merit within comics, and he planned to show the value of this genre. Comics for the most part have been viewed as disposable literature unworthy of any literary merit. However, over the last 30 years, scholars have been turning to these works with renewed energy and view them as an untapped resource brimming with content waiting to be analyzed. His research focuses on a comic subgenre that has received little attention – funny animal comics. His dissertation will specifically focus on the second wave of anthropomorphic comics to include Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles which established the movement and others like Usagi Yojimbo, Dalgoda, Omaha the Cat Dancer, Space Beaver, Boris the Bear and Fish Police.

After his presentation, Mr. Irby addressed all questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information he presented.

The Board of Trustees moved on to hear the superintendent's report.

IV. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Weltz presented his Superintendent Report to the Board of Trustees and discussed topics including but not limited to acknowledging the board, administration, and community for their collaborative efforts over the past several months, particularly related to recent bond initiatives. He highlighted the importance of professional support from the district's owner's representative and other experts to ensure successful project planning and execution.

He provided recognitions and acknowledgments, including:

- Barb Ridgway's upcoming departure and her work transferring responsibilities within central administration.

- Janelle Mickelson's upcoming retirement as Business Manager and the district's efforts to capture her knowledge before her departure.

- Appreciation for the Lewis and Clark County Elections Office, community members, Helena Schools staff, the Chamber of Commerce, the League of Women Voters, and student board representatives for their contributions to the bond efforts.

- Recognition of Taylor Lassiter, the new Communications Specialist, for enhancing transparency and public engagement through social media and outreach.

Superintendent Weltz also highlighted the impact of the bond projects on district facilities, including updated learning spaces, technology, athletic complexes, and the district kitchen, emphasizing the long-term benefits for students and the community.

The report concluded with a reminder of the significance of these initiatives for current and future generations of students and the importance of continued community support.

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.

V. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no general public comment and the Board of Trustees moved on to review the Consent Action Items.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. <u>Consent Action Items</u>

1. Personnel Actions
2. Approval of FY 2025-26 Out-Of-District Attendance Agreements (Non-Resident Students Attending HPS)
3. Approval of 8.26.25 Board of Trustees Special Board Meeting Minutes

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, "At this point I would entertain a motion to approve the *Consent Action Items* as presented."

Motion: Trustee Siobhan Hathhorn moved to approve the *Consent Action Items* as presented. Trustee Jenny Murnane Butcher seconded the motion.
Public Comment: None.
Vote: 6-0 motion carries unanimously.

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

B. <u>Items For Action</u>

1. **<u>Canvass of Election Results for Elementary Bond Levy</u>**

2. **<u>Canvass of Election Results for High School Bond Levy</u>**

3. **<u>Issue Certificates of Election for Elementary Bond Levy</u>**

4. **<u>Issue Certificates of Election for High School Bond Levy</u>**

5. **<u>Adoption of Resolution Authorizing Issuance of the Elementary Bonds</u>**

6. **<u>Adoption of Resolution Authorizing Issuance of the High School Bonds</u>**

Ms. Janelle Mickelson, Business Manager, and Mr. Dan Semmens, Partner, Dorsey & Whitney LLP introduced actions items one through six and addressed all questions from the Board of Trustees.

<u>Background:</u>

Bond elections for both the Helena Elementary School and the Helena High School were held on Tuesday September 9, 2025. Pursuant to 20-20-415, MCA, at the first regular or special meeting after receiving the certified tally sheets and no later than 25 days after the election, trustees must canvass the election results. After the canvass of the total votes cast, trustees must issue a certificate of election. In the case of an election on a proposition, the trustees must issue a certificate specifying the outcome of the election.

<u>Considerations:</u>

- The County Election Office provided the attached canvass reports on September 16, 2025.
    - Highlights:
        - Total registered voters in the elementary school were 40,257. Total ballots issued were 34,778. Total ballots tabulated were 20,985 with a total voter turnout of 52.13%.
        - Total registered voters in the high school were 42,483. Total ballots issued were 36,763. Total ballots tabulated were 22,089 with a total voter turnout of 51.99%.

- The election results were also provided by the county elections office on September 16, 2025.

- Highlights:
  - The elementary bond levy proposition passed with 50.90% of the votes cast (10,631 FOR, 10,256 AGAINST).
  - The high school bond levy proposition passed with 50.82% of the votes cast (11,151 FOR, 10,793 AGAINST).

Superintendent recommendation:

Canvass the election results and issue the certificates of election.

1. Canvass of Election Results for Elementary Bond Levy

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, "At this point I would entertain a motion for the following action item, "*Canvass of Election Results for Elementary Bond Levy*."

Motion: Trustee Kay Satre moved to approve the action item *Canvass of Election Results for Elementary Bond Levy* as presented. Trustee Linda Cleatus seconded the motion.
Public Comment: None.
Vote: 5-0 motion carries unanimously. *(Please note that Board Vice Chair Jennifer Walsh abstained from voting as she is a trustee strictly for the high school district, and this action item only pertains to the elementary district.)*

2. Canvass of Election Results for High School Bond Levy

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, "At this point I would entertain a motion for the following action item, "*Canvass of Election Results for High School Bond Levy."*

Motion: Trustee Jennifer Walsh moved to approve the action item *Canvass of Election Results for High School Bond Levy* as presented. Trustee Siobhan Hathhorn seconded the motion.
Public Comment: None.
Vote: 6-0 motion carries unanimously.

3. Issue Certificates of Election for Elementary Bond Levy

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, "At this point I would entertain a motion for the following action item, *Issue Certificates of Election for Elementary Bond Levy*."

Motion: Trustee Linda Cleatus moved to approve the action item *Issue Certificates of Election for Elementary Bond Levy* as presented. Trustee Kay Satre seconded the motion.
Public Comment: None.
Vote: 5-0 motion carries unanimously. *(Please note that Board Vice Chair Jennifer Walsh*

abstained from voting as she is a trustee strictly for the high school district, and this action item only pertains to the elementary district.)

4. **Issue Certificates of Election for High School Bond Levy**

   Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, "At this point I would entertain a motion for the following action item, *Issue Certificates of Election for High School Bond Levy*."

   Motion: Trustee Siobhan Hathhorn moved to approve the action item *Issue Certificates of Election for High School Bond Levy* as presented. Trustee Jennifer Walsh seconded the motion.
   Public Comment: None.
   Vote: 6-0 motion carries unanimously.

5. **Adoption of Resolution Authorizing Issuance of the Elementary Bonds**

   Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, "At this point I would entertain a motion for the following action item, *Adoption of Resolution Authorizing Issuance of the Elementary Bonds*."

   Motion: Trustee Kay Satre moved to approve the action item *Adoption of Resolution Authorizing Issuance of the Elementary Bonds* as presented. Trustee Siobhan Hathhorn seconded the motion.
   Public Comment: None.
   Vote: 5-0 motion carries unanimously. *(Please note that Board Vice Chair Jennifer Walsh abstained from voting as she is a trustee strictly for the high school district, and this action item only pertains to the elementary district.)*

6. **Adoption of Resolution Authorizing Issuance of the High School Bonds**

   Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, "At this point I would entertain a motion for the following action item, *Adoption of Resolution Authorizing Issuance of the High School Bonds*."

   Motion: Trustee Linda Cleatus moved to approve the action item *Adoption of Resolution Authorizing Issuance of the High School Bonds* as presented. Trustee Jenny Murnane Butcher seconded the motion.
   Public Comment: None.
   Vote: 6-0 motion carries unanimously.

7. **Letter of Determination Alternative Project Delivery Helena High School**

8. **Letter of Determination Alternative Project Delivery Capital High School**

9. <u>Letter of Determination Alternative Project Delivery Kessler Elementary School</u>

Mr. Todd Verrill, Facilities Director for Helena Public Schools, presented action items seven through nine: 7. *Letter of Determination Alternative Project Delivery Helena High School, 8. Letter of Determination Alternative Project Delivery Capital High School, and 9. Letter of Determination Alternative Project Delivery Kessler Elementary School.*

<u>Alternative Project Delivery Contracts – Helena High School, Capital High School, and Kessler Elementary School Projects</u>

Project Management:
Helena Public Schools has engaged a professional project management consulting firm, Hulteng CCM, Inc., with extensive experience in alternative project delivery methods to oversee the projects in collaboration with District Administration. This partnership ensures strong oversight, compliance with state statutes, and effective coordination throughout all phases of design and construction.

Procurement Process:
All services will be procured through open and transparent public processes consistent with Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 18-2-502. The District will follow a two-stage selection process:

RFQ/RFP Process:
A two-stage selection process will be used—beginning with a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to shortlist firms based on experience, staffing, safety, and bonding capacity, followed by a Request for Proposals (RFP) where finalists submit detailed proposals and presentations. The selection committee will evaluate all submissions to ensure fair, transparent competition and select the firm offering the best overall value to the District.

Project Rationale:
The Alternative Project Delivery Contract (APDC) approach is being used for these projects due to significant schedule demands and technical complexities, particularly related to demolition, renovation, and new construction activities. The method allows for a fast-track schedule by enabling concurrent design, permitting, and construction phases, supporting the District's goal of substantial completion and occupancy by Fall 2028.

Benefits:
Early engagement of a General Contractor/Construction Manager (GC/CM) will enhance cost control, schedule adherence, and value engineering throughout the design and construction phases. Collaboration among the GC/CM, design team, and Owner will ensure constructability, efficiency, and cost-effective design solutions while minimizing disruption to school operations.

Fair Competition:
The District's procurement process is specifically structured to avoid favoritism and maintain broad competition. The selection committee will evaluate submittals based solely on published criteria and overall project value, ensuring transparency and integrity in contractor selection.

These combined projects—Helena High School Demolition and New Construction, Capital High School Addition and Renovation, and Kessler Elementary Demolition and New Construction—represent significant investments in modernizing and improving educational facilities across the Helena Public Schools District.

Mr. Verrill and Mr. Shane Swandal, Hulteng CCM, Inc., addressed all questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

7.Letter of Determination Alternative Project Delivery Helena High School

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, "At this point I would entertain a motion for the following action item, *Letter of Determination Alternative Project Delivery Helena High School."*

Motion: Trustee Siobhan Hathhorn moved to approve the action item *Letter of Determination Alternative Project Delivery Helena High School* as presented. Trustee Linda Cleatus seconded the motion.
Public Comment: None.
Vote: 6-0 motion carries unanimously.

8.Letter of Determination Alternative Project Delivery Capital High School

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, "At this point I would entertain a motion for the following action item, *Letter of Determination Alternative Project Delivery Capital High School."*

Motion: Trustee Jenny Murnane Butcher moved to approve the action item *Letter of Determination Alternative Project Delivery Capital High School* as presented. Trustee Kay Satre seconded the motion.
Public Comment: None.
Vote: 6-0 motion carries unanimously.

9.**Letter of Determination Alternative Project Delivery Kessler Elementary School**

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, "At this point I would entertain a motion for the following action item, *Letter of Determination Alternative Project Delivery Kessler Elementary School."*

Motion: Trustee Siobhan Hathhorn moved to approve the action item *Letter of Determination Alternative Project Delivery Kessler Elementary School* as presented. Trustee Kay Satre seconded the motion.
Public Comment: None.
Vote: 5-0 motion carries unanimously. *(Please note that Board Vice Chair Jennifer Walsh abstained from voting as she is a trustee strictly for the high school district, and this action item only pertains to the elementary district.)*

C. <u>Item For Information</u>

1. Overview of Bond Issuance Timeline and Procedures: Bridget Ekstrom, Managing Director, Public Finance Banker, D.A. Davidson & Co.

   Ms. Bridget Ekstrom, Managing Director, Public Finance Banker, with D.A. Davidson & Co. provided an overview of the bond issuance timeline and procedures to the Board of Trustees. Key points included:

   - The Bond Finance Committee will review initial documents and updates on market conditions on October 9th.
   - Official bond documents will be prepared for submission to rating agencies and the community.
   - Bonds could be presented to the market as early as November 20th, with final board approval and closing scheduled before December 18th.
   - This issuance represents the first series of authorized bonds, with amounts and timing to be fine-tuned based on market conditions, interest rates, and internal timelines.
   - The process ensures thorough review, market readiness, and alignment with the District's financial planning.

Ms. Ekstrom addressed all questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

VII. BOARD/SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

The Board and Superintendent Weltz expressed appreciation for the district team's work on bond projects, noting the fast-paced timeline and goal of student occupancy by August 2028. Phased construction at some sites, particularly Helena High School, will require careful scheduling. Project updates and public communication will be maintained via the district's construction website.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Jennifer McKee adjourned the meeting at 6:49 p.m.

Candice Delvaux, Recording Secretary Date