



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

Steering Committee

HPS Pay Plan Rules

Monday, November 17th, 2025

Lincoln Center Board of Trustees Conference Room

4:15 p.m.

MINUTES

ATTENDEES

Janet Armstrong, Trustee	Jane Shawn, HEA President
Jim Kerins, CMS	Wynn Randall, Rossiter Elementary Principal
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent 6-12	Taylor Lassiter, Communications Officer
Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director	Anna Alger, Educator
Candice Delvaux, Executive Assistant	Gary Myers, Director of Educational Technology
Riley Medley, HR Recruiter/Substitute Specialist	Kathy Kidder, CHS Assistant Principal
Kirstan Roush, SACC Coordinator	Justine Alberts, Assistant Superintendent PreK-5
	Sol Jones, C.R. Anderson Assistant Principal

I. CALL TO ORDER

Trustee Janet Armstrong called the meeting to order at 4:17 p.m.

II. REVIEW OF AGENDA

The agenda was reviewed, and no changes were requested.

III. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no general public comment.

IV. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/DISCUSSION

A. Review of the Approved Compensation Philosophy

Ms. Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director for Helena Public Schools, welcomed the committee and provided background on the district's work with CMS over the past two years to bring structure and transparency to compensation. She reviewed the development of the salary survey, compensation manual, and compensation philosophy, and explained that the next step is to establish clear pay plan rules to guide salary decisions for new hires, promotions, and adjustments. She noted that the current focus is on the independent employee group, with plans to include administrative staff in the future. Ms. Mizell emphasized the goal of aligning the pay plan rules with the compensation philosophy, gathering feedback before Board adoption, and ultimately making the materials publicly available in a clear and meaningful way.

Mr. Kerins with CMS reviewed the district's approved compensation philosophy and explained that the accompanying pay plan rules are intended to formalize and sustain the philosophy by ensuring consistency, transparency, and equity in compensation decisions. He emphasized that clearly documented pay plan rules are essential for continuity over time, particularly as leadership changes, and help employees and managers understand how the compensation system works. He noted that compensation systems should be reviewed periodically for long-term sustainability.

He described the compensation philosophy as a framework that explains why and how employees are paid, supporting recruitment, retention, and motivation of a highly qualified workforce. The philosophy aligns with the district's mission and has already guided the development of the classification and pay system by addressing market competitiveness, internal equity, experience, education, and responsibility.

Mr. Kerins highlighted key objectives of the philosophy, including rewarding professional growth, allowing movement within pay ranges, supporting promotions, attracting new talent through competitive starting wages, and maintaining fiscal responsibility. He also stressed the importance of legal compliance, equity, and monitoring for both direct and unintended adverse impacts. He concluded by explaining that the pay plan rules will define how compensation is administered—such as setting starting pay, handling promotions or demotions, and negotiating hire rates—so that pay decisions remain objective, defensible, and strategically aligned with the district's limited resources and priorities. Mr. Kerins addressed questions from the committee regarding the information presented.

B. Benefits of Formal Pay Plan Rules

Mr. Kerins outlined several key benefits of implementing formal pay plan rules. He emphasized that clearly defined rules promote equity and transparency, which is especially important for a public-sector employer. An open and well-documented pay plan allows employees to

understand how compensation decisions are made and provides a mechanism for identifying and addressing potential pay inconsistencies.

He noted that formal pay plan rules support budgetary discipline by helping the district manage salary growth responsibly and avoid unsustainable increases that could lead to financial strain, layoffs, or an inability to provide meaningful raises in future years. Market alignment was also identified as a significant benefit, ensuring the district remains competitive in attracting and retaining qualified employees.

Additionally, Mr. Kerins highlighted that pay plan rules create consistency and clarity in compensation practices across the organization. By establishing standardized guidelines for pay decisions, the district can ensure compensation remains fair, defensible, and aligned with organizational goals while still allowing for thoughtful discretion when appropriate. Mr. Kerins addressed questions from the committee regarding the benefits of formal pay plan rules.

C. **Proposed Pay Plan Rules for the District**

Mr. Kerins outlined the key components of the proposed pay plan rules and explained how they would be administered. He described the establishment of a maintained salary matrix for independent positions, with defined minimum and maximum pay ranges and step progression. Positions would be assigned to pay ranges based on the classification manual, ensuring consistency in how jobs are evaluated and placed within the structure.

He explained that the pay plan allows flexibility in administering pay ranges to address market conditions. This includes adjusting pay ranges to remain competitive without necessarily increasing individual salaries, raising entry rates to improve recruitment, and extending pay range ceilings to support employee retention. The rules also allow for targeted market adjustments for critical or hard-to-fill positions without reclassifying the job's grade, helping the district stay responsive to labor market changes. Mr. Kerins noted that regular salary surveys and comparability adjustments are intended to minimize the need for frequent market corrections, while still providing flexibility when necessary.

Finally, he discussed implementation considerations, including establishing effective dates for pay adjustments, handling retroactive adjustments when appropriate, and clearly communicating the rationale for compensation decisions. Emphasis was placed on transparency and public understanding, particularly regarding market comparisons and the justification for any pay adjustments, to ensure confidence in the fairness and fiscal responsibility of the pay plan.

Mr. Kerins addressed questions from the committee regarding the proposed pay plan rules for the district.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:32 p.m.