



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.

Board of Trustees Work Session Meeting

Tuesday, February 24, 2026

4:00 p.m.

PAL

MINUTES

ATTENDEES

Trustees

Jennifer McKee, Chair
Jennifer Walsh, Vice Chair
Kay Satre, Trustee
Linda Cleatus, Trustee
Janet Armstrong, Trustee
Siobhan Hathhorn, Trustee

Others

Rex Wertz, Superintendent
Matt Carey, PAL Principal
Kaitlyn Hess, Data & Federal Programs Director
Todd Verrill, Facilities Director
Candice Delvaux, Executive Assistant
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent 6-12
Taylor Lassiter, Communications Specialist
Gary Myers, Director of Educational Technology
Justine Alberts, Assistant Superintendent PreK-5
Jane Shawn, HEA President
Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director
Lona Carter, Student Health Services and Special Education Director

I. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board Chair Jennifer McKee called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m., and the Board participated in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. REVIEW OF AGENDA

Board Chair Jennifer McKee reviewed the agenda with the Board of Trustees, and there were no changes. The Board of Trustees then proceeded to hear General Public Comment.

III. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no general public comment.

IV. PRESENTATION

Principal Matt Carey, PAL

Mr. Matt Carey, Principal of PAL, provided a comprehensive overview of the school and reviewed the pamphlet included in the agenda.

2025-26 Demographics

- Total Enrollment: 85
- Senior Class: 29
- Junior Class: 33
- Sophomore Class: 14
- Freshman Class: 9
- Free & reduced lunch: 57%
- Students with IEPs: 18%
- Students with 504 plans: 26%
- McKinney-Vento: 12%
- Graduation Rate: 88% (class of 2025)
- Students attend PAL through an application process every quarter. Students start in orientation and transition into the academy.

Graduation Requirements

- 23 credits are required to graduate from PAL
- 4 English
- 3 Math
- 1 Social Studies
- 2 Science
- 1.5 Physical Education
- .5 Health
- 1 Art
- 1 Government
- 1 American History
- 1 CTE/Vocational
- 7 Electives

Principal Matt Carey highlighted the school's strong commitment to community partnership and family engagement. He shared that the school collaborates with numerous local organizations, including MT FWP, Kiwanis, RMCU, Prickly Pear Land Trust, the Montana World Affairs Council, and the Friendship Center, and hosts several PAL events such as the Thanksgiving celebration and Senior Graduation Speeches.

Principal Carey also emphasized the school's focus on career readiness, noting that students complete 15 hours of career exploration or internship experience in a field of their choice, often in partnership with the same community organizations. These experiences are designed

to help students transition successfully to college or a career immediately following graduation. Principal Carey responded to questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

V. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. **Consent Action Items**

1. 1/27/26 Board of Trustees Work Session Meeting Minutes
2. Personnel Actions

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

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

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-0; motion carries unanimously.

B. **Item for Action**

1. **Consideration of Authorization to Utilize Available Bond Premium and Interest Funds for Facility Parity Between Helena High School and Capital High School**

Superintendent Rex Weltz presented action item 1, *Consideration of Authorization to Utilize Available Bond Premium and Interest Funds for Facility Parity Between Helena High School and Capital High School*. It is recommended that the Board of Trustees authorize the utilization of available bond premium and interest funds to ensure parity between the educational spaces at the new Helena High School and the renovated and expanded Capital High School. Strategic use of these funds will allow the District to maximize the community’s investment and further align our facilities with our commitment to providing comparable educational opportunities across both campuses. Superintendent Weltz addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion to approve action item 1, *Consideration of Authorization to Utilize Available Bond Premium and Interest Funds for Facility Parity Between Helena High School and Capital High School*.”

Motion: Trustee Janet Armstrong moved to approve action item 1, *Consideration of Authorization to Utilize Available Bond Premium and Interest Funds for Facility Parity Between Helena High School and Capital High School*. Trustee Kay Satre seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 0-6; motion fails. (Note: Trustees recommended that a revised motion take place, replacing the term “consideration of authorization” with “authorization” to clarify intent.)

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion to approve action item 1, *Authorization to Utilize Available Bond Premium and Interest Funds for Facility Parity Between Helena High School and Capital High School.*”

Motion: Trustee Kay Satre moved to authorize the use of available bond premium and interest funds for facility parity between Helena High School and Capital High School. Trustee Siobhan Hathhorn seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-0; motion carries unanimously.

C. **Item for Information**

1. **Removal of Facilities Warehouses in Preparation for District Kitchen Construction**

Facilities Director Todd Verrill updated the board on preparations for the district kitchen construction as part of the bond project. Two old facilities warehouses are slated for demolition, while some storage sheds will be retained. Mr. Verrill explained that a Request for Proposal (RFP) has been issued to see if contractors are interested in repurposing the warehouses, potentially removing them without sending them to the landfill, and also relocating the storage sheds. The RFP advertisement will run for two consecutive weeks, with proposals due March 16. Access to the new leased warehouse will begin March 1 to facilitate moving items. Legal counsel has reviewed the process, and robust insurance requirements are in place for contractors. Mr. Verrill will provide updates as responses to the RFP are received; if no viable proposals are submitted, the district will proceed with demolition.

Mr. Verrill addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

VI. **BOARD OR SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS**

Trustees reflected on the recent community meeting at Helena High School, noting that approximately 50–60 community members attended. They shared that while much of the information had been previously presented, the meeting provided a valuable opportunity for community members to ask questions. Trustees appreciated the thoughtful engagement and noted recurring topics of interest, including parking. The Superintendent also reminded the Board of the upcoming work session on Thursday at 10:00 a.m. in the PD Center, where project firms will provide updates on progress and campus developments.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Jennifer McKee adjourned the meeting at 4:54 p.m.

Candice Delvaux, Recording Secretary