



Superintendent

Rex Wertz
324-2001

Business Director

Sam Holman
324-2040

Board of Trustees Meeting

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

Tuesday, February 10, 2026
5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE – Present unless otherwise noted:

Jennifer McKee, Chair
Jennifer Walsh, Vice Chair
Siobhan Hathhorn, Trustee
Linda Cleatus, Trustee
Janet Armstrong, Trustee
Keith Meyer, Trustee
Kay Satre, Trustee
Jenny Murnane Butcher,
Trustee
Brock Gardipee, Helena High School Student Representative for the Board of Trustees
Rex Wertz, Superintendent
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Sam Holman, Business Director
Todd Verrill, Facilities Director
Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director
Gary Myers, Director of Educational
Technology
Justine Alberts, Assistant Superintendent
Kaitlyn Hess, Data and Federal Programs
Director
Lona Carter, Student Health Services and Special Education Director
Taylor Lassiter, Communications Specialist
Jane Shawn, HEA President
Representatives from SMA/A&E and Dick Anderson Construction
Representatives from Slate/RTA Architecture and Langlas
Representatives from Mosaic Architecture/Cushing Terrell and Golden Eagle/Swank Enterprises
Many guests of the public, as well as Helena School District staff

I. CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board Vice Chair Jennifer Walsh 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 proposed changes.

The Board of Trustees then moved on to hear Recognitions.

III. RECOGNITIONS

A. American Welding Society Section Educator Award & District Educator Award

The Board of Trustees extends its sincere congratulations to Helena High School educator Cynthia Galbavy on her receipt of both the American Welding Society Section Educator Award and the District Educator Award. These prestigious honors recognize her exemplary instructional performance and her unwavering commitment to the promotion, advancement, and expansion of welding skills and technical knowledge among students. Through her dedication, expertise, and passion for career and technical education, Ms. Galbavy has had a lasting impact on student achievement, workforce readiness, and the strength of the skilled trades pipeline within our community. Her leadership and innovation exemplify the highest standards of educational excellence and professional service.

B. MASSP Community Partner in Education Award Winner

The Board of Trustees extends its sincere congratulations to PAL Community Partner Travis Brazill, who has been named the Montana Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) Community Partner in Education Award recipient for this year. This award honors a private citizen outside of the professional education system who demonstrates exceptional dedication to supporting students, schools, and communities through meaningful involvement in educational initiatives. The recipient is announced and formally recognized at the Montana Principals Conference held each January. Through his actions, generosity, and genuine care for students, Travis Brazill truly embodies what it means to be a Community Partner in Education. The Board of Trustees is proud to recognize his contributions and congratulates him on this well-deserved honor.

IV. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

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

Recognitions

- I want to extend our district’s deepest thanks to all who donated to Helena Public Schools through the Montana Innovative Educational Tax Credit Program. Thank you for investing in our students’

futures.

- National School Counseling Appreciation Week: February 3-7, 2026
- National School Resource Officer Appreciation Day: February 15, 2026
- Thank you to Callie Aschim & the Chamber of Commerce for hosting the Community Outreach: Brews & Blueprints. The next event will be February 25 at 5:30 p.m. at Brothers Tapworks.
- Thank you to Becca Leaphart, Brenda Carney, and the Helena Education Foundation for hosting a Trustee Appreciation Lunch. We deeply appreciate their recognition of our Board of Trustees and their ongoing support of our schools and community.
- Other

New Business

- Facilities Bond Projects –
 - Bond Update
 - HHS/PAL Precedent Tour-Spokane, Washington-December
 - KESS Precedent Tour-Spokane, Washington-January
 - CHS – Planning for this month
 - Bond/Construction/Facility Meetings
 - All Team Construction Meeting
 - City, Architects, GCCM, Construction Owners’ Representatives, HPS
 - Owners’ Rep
 - HHS Project-HHS, PAL, District Kitchen, Stadium
 - CHS Project
 - KESS Project
- Grow Our Own Initiative Update
- New Podcast Series – From the Ground Up
- CMS Ongoing Work –
 - ◆ Compensation Philosophy
 - ◆ Pay Plan Rules
 - ◆ Independent and Administrative Salary Matrix
 - ◆ Activity/Athletic Coaching Compensation Market Analysis
- District Academic Focus Work – 2026-2027
 - ◆ Academic Performance Indicators and Targets
 - ◆ Data Dashboard
 - ◆ Behaviors and Academic Growth
- Bridged Health Alliance
- Copy/Print Center Equipment Lease Contracts and Efficiency Upgrades
- National Conference on Education – Nashville
 - ◆ Assistant Superintendents & Superintendent
- Dr. Plucker Gifted & Talented Program Review
- Ameresco Energy Audits Across the District (Elementary)
- No School - February 16
- Other

Outreach/Meetings

- AA Superintendents' Weekly Meeting
- KESS GCCM RFP/RFQ Submission Review and Interviews
- Bond/Construction/Facility Meetings
- All Team Meeting – High School and Elementary Bond Projects
- Owner's Rep
- Bond
- Bond Finance
- HHS Project - Architect Team & Construction Team
- CHS Project - Architect Team & Construction Team
- KESS Project - Architect Team & Construction Team
- Rotary Club Presentation
- Chamber of Commerce
- Community Outreach – Brews & Blueprints
- Board Leadership
- Legal Counsel
- HEA
- HEF
- HEF Executive Committee
- Parent Advisory Committee
- Teacher Advisory Committee
- Health Benefits Committee
- Helena Food Share
- Cabinet & Leadership
- TV, Print, Radio, and Media
- Other

That concluded the Superintendent's Report portion of the agenda. Superintendent Wertz 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.

The Board of Trustees proceeded to hear the Facilities Bond Projects Updates.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Items for Information - Facilities Bond Projects Updates

1. Kessler Elementary School Update

Representatives from Mosaic Architecture and Cushing Terrell provided an update on the Kessler Elementary School design process. They reported that the educational specifications and programming documents are being finalized and will be delivered this week, marking the transition into schematic design. The team highlighted extensive engagement with teachers, students, and the community to capture the school’s culture and programmatic needs. Key themes included: a tight-knit, inclusive community; a focus on belonging and support for all students; joyful, hands-on, collaborative learning; and a strong appreciation for the library and arts. Student engagement included participatory exercises and a mural project reflecting their input. Community engagement reinforced a desire for a welcoming, collaborative environment. Quantitative work included cataloging departmental space needs and conducting a precedent trip with staff to inform design decisions. The team emphasized opportunities presented by the site, including expansive north and south views, natural daylighting potential, and the strategic placement of the library as the school’s heart. Representatives from Mosaic Architecture and Cushing Terrell addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

2. Capital High School Update

Representatives from Slate and RTA Architecture provided an update on the Capital High School design process. The project has recently moved into schematic design following approval of the concept design. The Design Advisory Group (DAG) guided development of project principles through community surveys, a SWOT analysis, and “day in the life” exercises. Key guiding principles include improving traffic flow, parking, site circulation, and safety; enhancing the school’s identity; creating flexible, student-centered interior spaces; improving the cafeteria; and integrating CTE programs into the school. Two concept designs were reviewed, with Concept B (“Valley Entry”) selected as the preferred option. This design establishes a new central entry, reduces the building addition size, improves traffic separation for buses, students, and parents, and maintains key spaces such as the auxiliary gym and CTE areas. The 1996 building will be used as flex space during construction and demolished at the end of the project. A massing video demonstrated how the new construction will transform the building’s appearance and site layout. Cost estimating and ongoing planning are being supported by Langlas, working closely with the design team. Representatives from Slate and RTA Architecture addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

3. Helena High Campus Update

- a. Helena High School**
- b. Project for Alternative Learning (PAL)**
- c. District Kitchen**
- d. Competition Stadium**

Mr. Tim Tholt of Dick Anderson Construction and Mr. Tim Meldrum of SMA and A&E provided an update on the Helena High School campus project. The team is refining the construction schedule and sequencing to minimize disruption to ongoing academics, with careful coordination around the art and CTE spaces. Infrastructure planning is underway, including assessments of sewer connections and coordination with Northwestern Energy. Master planning is being completed for the overall campus, including the Helena High School expansion to the north and the PAL building to the south. The design leverages underutilized spaces, such as existing gyms,

to provide additional activity space for PAL and flexible, student-centered areas. Parking, field layouts, tennis courts, and track and field event areas are also being addressed, ensuring safety, accessibility, and efficient use of the campus footprint. The stadium is designed to accommodate approximately 5,000 seats, with a minimum of 4,500 to meet Montana High School Association standards, while maintaining sightlines and minimizing obstruction with lighting technology. Construction on the district kitchen facility is expected to begin shortly, with progress anticipated to outpace other campus areas. The project emphasizes close coordination with the city, utilities, and stakeholders to align scheduling, phasing, and deliverables. Mr. Meldrum addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

The Board of Trustees took a brief recess and, upon returning, proceeded to review the Items for Information.

B. Items for Information

1. SACC and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

Ms. Kaitlyn Hess, Data and Federal Programs Director, introduced Ms. Kirstan Roush, SACC Coordinator, who presented the information item, *SACC and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)*. Ms. Roush provided an overview of the School Age Child Care (SACC) participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). SACC continues to provide CACFP-compliant meals and snacks to students. Reimbursement supports food, supplies, and staffing costs but does not fully cover program expenses. Annual reporting to the Board is required, and a CACFP audit is scheduled for Spring 2026. Monthly participation and reimbursement data for September through December 2025 were reviewed. Ms. Roush addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

2. Policy 2020: Student and Family Privacy Rights

Ms. Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director, presented the information item, *Policy 2020: Student and Family Privacy Rights*. This policy is updated to reflect changes from House Bill 599 regarding parental rights law. Parents may opt their child out of any personal analysis, evaluation, survey, or data collection that does not require personally identifiable information. Parents must opt in to any personal analysis, evaluation, survey, or data collection that requires personally identifiable information, unless that information is essential for establishing a student's education record or for a demographic survey to validate an achievement test used to gain admission to a postsecondary institution. Ms. Mizell addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

3. Policy 3010: Entrance, Placement and Transfer

Ms. Mizell presented the information item, *Policy 3010: Entrance, Placement and Transfer*. This policy is updated to reflect House Bill 168, which permits districts to receive ANB funding for special education preschool students based upon aggregate hours of instruction. Additionally, students with disabilities may be eligible to continue enrollment until they reach twenty-two years of age, unless they have received a regular high school diploma. Ms. Mizell addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

4. **Policy 3141: Nonresident Student Enrollment**

Ms. Mizell presented the information item, *Policy 3141: Nonresident Student Enrollment*. House Bill 250 changes the out-of-district attendance laws that went into effect on July 1, 2025, and applies to attendance agreements. The Board of Trustees may deny enrollment of an out-of-district student if accepting the student(s) would negatively impact the quality of education for resident students because the maximum student contract hours for a teacher of the class or maximum class sizes under accreditation standards would be exceeded. Additionally, the Board of Trustees may deny enrollment of a nondisabled student who has been suspended in or out of school in any school the student previously enrolled in within the previous three years. Ms. Mizell addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

5. **Policy 7057: Use of Automated External Defibrillation**

Ms. Mizell presented the information item, *Policy 7057: Use of Automated External Defibrillation*. This policy has been updated to reflect the components of the district's AED program and changes related to maintaining AEDs in accordance with Senate Bill 86. Specifically, SB 86 changes the requirement for maintaining a written plan for AEDs to requiring only a written notice of the location of the AED be provided to the 911 service covering the area. Ms. Mizell addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

6. **Policy 8100: Transportation**

Ms. Mizell presented the information item, *Policy 8100: Transportation*. This policy has been updated to reflect legal references and to be in compliance with House Bill 250 regarding transportation requirements for students with disabilities. Ms. Mizell addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

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

C. **Consent Action Items**

1. Personnel Actions
2. Warrants
3. Approval of FY 2025-26 Out-of-District Attendance Agreements (Non-Resident Students Attending HPS)
4. 1/13/26 Board of Trustees Full Board Meeting Minutes
5. 1/16/26 Board of Trustees Special Board Meeting Minutes
6. 1/22/26 Board of Trustees Work Session 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 Kay Satre moved to approve the *Consent Action Items* as presented.

Trustee Siobhan Hathorn seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0; motion carries unanimously. (*Trustee Janet Armstrong was not in attendance for the vote.*)

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

D. Items for Action

1. Consideration of Approval of SACC Rate Increases

Ms. Kirstan Roush presented action item 1, *Consideration of Approval of SACC Rate Increases* to the Board of Trustees. Ms. Roush presented the proposed dates, rates, and planning updates for Summer SACC 2026. The program is scheduled to operate from June 15 through August 14 at Central School, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., with select closure dates. Proposed weekly rates and non-refundable activity fees were reviewed, including adjusted rates for shortened weeks and specialty programming. Ms. Roush noted the proposed rate increase from 2025 reflects an approximate cost of \$6.50 per hour and remains competitive within the Helena market. No school-year rate increases are currently proposed for 2026–27, with the exception of full-day programs. Preliminary summer themes, planned field trips, and registration timelines were also shared. Ms. Roush 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 Approval of SACC Rate Increases.*”

Motion: Trustee Linda Cleatus moved to approve action item 1, *Consideration of Approval of SACC Rate Increases.* Trustee Jennifer Walsh seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0; motion carries unanimously. (*Trustee Janet Armstrong was not in attendance for the vote.*)

2. Consideration of the Recommendation to Join Bridged Health Alliance

Mr. Rich Franco, Human Resources Benefits Manager, presented action item 2, *Consideration of the Recommendation to Join Bridged Health Alliance* to the Board of Trustees. Mr. Franco, on behalf of the Health Benefits Committee, presented the following recommendation for Plan Year 2026–2027 stating that HSD#1 join the Bridged Alliance Trust, conditional on the following contingencies: (1) The contract to join the Bridged Alliance Trust must include: The ability for HSD#1 to retain its current contracts with St. Peter’s for as long as those contracts remain more advantageous to the District; and the ability for HSD#1 to retain its current administrative fees with Allegiance, for as long as they are less than those of Bridged Alliance. (2) Bridged Alliance to achieve dynamic multiple Medicare contracts with Montana hospitals. (3) Bridged Alliance must allow HSD#1 to have the final Tier 2 prescription PBM contract with Capital Rx reviewed by the Health Benefits Committee and its consultants. The Committee must approve the final contract. Mr. Franco further stated that the formal contract language outlining these contingencies will be developed by the HSD#1 legal team and

provided to Bridged Alliance upon completion. Mr. Franco addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented. Mr. John Doran with Bridged Health Alliance also addressed questions from the Board of Trustees.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion to approve action item 2, *Consideration of the Recommendation to Join Bridged Health Alliance.*”

Motion: Trustee Kay Satre moved to follow the recommendation from the Health Benefits Committee to join Bridged Health Alliance conditional upon the contingencies presented. Trustee Siobhan Hathhorn seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Board Comments: Trustee Satre acknowledged the extensive work of the Health Benefits Committee over the past several years, particularly the last three, in evaluating health plan options, managing premiums, and maintaining both choice and plan quality. She emphasized the significant time commitment of committee members, many of whom balance full-time jobs, and recognized the learning and collaboration involved in the process. She explained that the committee’s recommendation to join Bridged Health Alliance allows the district to maintain control over plan design and claims management, while potentially gaining additional value over time, including pooled stop-loss insurance, pharmacy, and administrative savings. Trustee Satre noted that the alliance is structured specifically for public schools and their employees, providing long-term stability and predictability in premiums, and enabling stronger negotiation with healthcare providers. She also acknowledged that some terms are still being finalized, which required careful consideration before committing to a five-year agreement. One of the trustees highlighted the importance of careful decision-making in the context of public school funding, noting that joining Bridged Health Alliance allows the district to benefit from available resources without leaving funds “on the table.” Regarding next steps, trustees discussed the development of formal contract language by Helena Public Schools’ legal team. Three contingencies have been identified to safeguard the district’s plan financially and legally. If legal counsel recommends additional contingencies during drafting, these will be reviewed by the Health Benefits Committee and brought back to the full board for approval.

Vote: 7-0; motion carries unanimously. (*Trustee Janet Armstrong was not in attendance for the vote.*)

3. Consideration of Approval of a Sabbatical for the 2026-2027 School Year

Assistant Superintendent Justine Alberts presented action item 3, *Consideration of Approval of a Sabbatical for the 2026-2027 School Year* to the Board of Trustees.

Background:

The New Professionalism Committee is comprised of two (2) designees appointed by the Superintendent and three (3) designees appointed by the Association President. The Committee is responsible for reviewing and awarding New Professionalism funds for approved proposals, sabbaticals, and Tuition and Fees requests. The New Professionalism Committee has met and reviewed sabbatical leave applications for the 2026–2027 school year. The Committee

recommends approval of the following sabbatical request, briefly described below.

Erika McMillin, Jim Darcy School, School Psychologist
Spring Semester – 2026-2027 SY

Ms. McMillin is requesting a one-semester sabbatical during the Spring 2027 semester to strengthen her skills in consensus-building and conflict resolution, enabling her to more effectively support students, families, and staff in her role as a school psychologist. Her plan includes a hybrid mentorship with Senior Organizational Development Facilitator Diane Groves, consisting of weekly virtual meetings, in-person facilitation experiences, and focused professional learning and literature review related to consensus-building and restorative practices. Upon returning to Helena Public Schools, Ms. McMillin intends to share her learning by providing professional support through presentations, consultation, and practical tools and resources (such as guides and handouts) to help school teams strengthen collaborative problem-solving systems. Her application is supported by strong letters of recommendation highlighting her leadership and positive impact.

Committee Recommendation:
Approve Erika McMillin’s sabbatical.

Assistant Superintendent Alberts 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 3, *Consideration of Approval of a Sabbatical for the 2026-2027 School Year.*”

Motion: Trustee Jennifer Walsh moved approval of the Sabbatical for the 2026-2027 school year for Ms. Erika McMillin. Trustee Jenny Murnane Butcher seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0; motion carries unanimously. (*Trustee Janet Armstrong was not in attendance for the vote.*)

4. Consideration of Approval of the Calendar Committee Proposal for the 2026-2027 School Year

Assistant Superintendent Josh McKay presented action item 4, *Consideration of Approval of the Calendar Committee Proposal for the 2026-2027 School Year* to the Board of Trustees. Assistant Superintendent McKay presented the recommended 2026–2027 school calendar as developed by the Calendar Committee. Committee members were Thomas Baty, Jane Shawn, Gary Myers, Leighann Wilson, Chelsea Kingston, Justine Alberts, Brian Kessler, Joice Franzen, Starsha Frederickson, Lisa George, and Josh McKay.

Assistant Superintendent McKay explained that the proposed calendar begins with a three-day first week for students, followed by a five-day week and then a four-day week due to Labor Day. He noted that because Labor Day falls later in September, maintaining the traditional 3/4/5 start format while delaying the start date would push the end of the school year into the

third week of June, which was not recommended. The calendar includes a weeklong spring break and a two-week winter break. He further noted that the proposed end-of-year schedule supports student learning outcomes, particularly at the high school level, and provides for a three-day final week to improve the semester testing experience. To accomplish this, a snow day (make-up day, if needed) was added as a no-school day on May 28, prior to Memorial Day weekend, which is historically a high-absence day.

Assistant Superintendent McKay also shared that the Calendar Committee will continue meeting throughout the spring to further discuss strategies to support student outcomes, serve the community, and maintain a positive work environment.

Assistant Superintendent McKay 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 4, *Consideration of Approval of the Calendar Committee Proposal for the 2026-2027 School Year.*”

Motion: Trustee Kay Satre moved to approve action item 4, *Consideration of Approval of the Calendar Committee Proposal for the 2026-2027 School Year.* Trustee Linda Cleatus seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0; motion carries unanimously. (*Trustee Janet Armstrong was not in attendance for the vote.*)

5. Consideration of Approval of the Facilities Warehouse Lease

Mr. Todd Verrill, Facilities Director, presented action item 5, *Consideration of Approval of the Facilities Warehouse Lease*, to the Board of Trustees. Mr. Verrill presented a request for Board approval of a commercial lease for a warehouse and equipment yard located at 1401 N. Oakes Street for use by the District’s Facilities Department. He explained that due to the construction of the new district kitchen on the property currently used by the Facilities Department, the district requires a replacement facility and additional space to store supplies, vehicles, and equipment for the next five years.

Currently, the Facilities and Custodial Departments utilize two cold storage warehouses totaling 3,300 square feet and an outdoor vehicle and equipment yard of 34,000 square feet, which accommodates 10 work trucks, 12 trailers, 20 miscellaneous pieces of equipment, and four storage sheds. The proposed Oakes Street property offers approximately 4,480 square feet of cold storage, 840 square feet of heated storage, and 22,264 square feet of yard space.

Mr. Verrill noted that the property is owned by JC Hunter, LLC, of Missoula, and the parties have agreed in principle to the proposed lease terms. Megan Morris of Kaleva Law Office reviewed the lease and deemed it legally acceptable. The lease proposes a monthly rate of \$5,000 for a five-year term, beginning March 1, 2026, through February 28, 2031.

Leasing this property will enable the Facilities and Custodial Departments to continue

operating efficiently during the construction of the new district kitchen, Helena High, Capital High, and Kessler Elementary Schools. Funding for the \$60,000 annual lease will come from the Building Reserve Fund, the Interlocal Fund, or the Ray Bjork building lease proceeds (to be determined).

Mr. Verrill 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 5, *Consideration of Approval of the Facilities Warehouse Lease.*”

Motion: Trustee Linda Cleatus moved to approve action item 5, *Consideration of Approval of the Facilities Warehouse Lease.* Trustee Jennifer Walsh seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0; motion carries unanimously. (*Trustee Janet Armstrong was not in attendance for the vote.*)

6. Consideration of Approval of Energy Contracting Resolution with Ameresco, Inc.

Mr. Verrill presented action item 6, *Consideration of Approval of Energy Contracting Resolution with Ameresco, Inc.*, to the Board of Trustees. Representatives from Ameresco provided a presentation and addressed questions from the Board of Trustees. Ameresco outlined the ESPC process, including completion of an Investment Grade Audit to identify energy savings, operational efficiencies, and capital cost avoidance opportunities across district facilities. Phase One (2026) includes elementary lighting retrofits, boiler plant replacement at Warren School, and retro-commissioning work. Phase Two (2027) includes HVAC and boiler upgrades at multiple elementary schools, temperature control improvements, and system upgrades, with final design and pricing to return to the Board in September. The proposal leverages building reserve funds and financing to accelerate needed deferred maintenance projects, reducing long-term inflationary costs and generating projected construction savings while improving energy efficiency, indoor air quality, and occupant comfort. The approach allows equipment to be transferable in future rebuild scenarios and aims to provide long-term financial stability while advancing facility improvements districtwide.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion to approve action item 6, *Consideration of Approval of Energy Contracting Resolution with Ameresco, Inc.*”

Motion: Trustee Keith Meyer moved to approve the Energy Contracting Resolution with Ameresco, Inc. Trustee Siobhan Hathhorn seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0; motion carries unanimously. (*Trustee Janet Armstrong was not in attendance for the vote.*)

7. Policy 1020: School Board Elections

Ms. Mizell presented action item 7, *Policy 1020: School Board Elections*, to the Board of Trustees. This policy has been updated to reflect the changes to candidate filing deadlines and withdrawal under House Bill 406. There is also a requirement that school elections must be called at least 145 days before a regular election but can be amended until 70 days prior to the election. There is an allowance for a period of 70 days to call a special election. Ballot certification must occur not less than 40 days before the election. Ms. Mizell 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 7, *Policy 1020: School Board Elections*.”

Motion: Trustee Linda Cleatus moved to approve action item 7, *Policy 1020: School Board Elections*. Trustee Kay Satre seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0; motion carries unanimously. (*Trustee Janet Armstrong was not in attendance for the vote.*)

8. Policy 2103: Religion and Religious Activities

Ms. Mizell presented action item 8, *Policy 2103: Religion and Religious Activities*, to the Board of Trustees. This policy has been updated to reflect changes to House Bill 343, which now requires—rather than simply permits—the district to release a student at the parent’s request (at least annually) for not less than one hour per week for formal religious instruction. Ms. Mizell 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 8, *Policy 2103: Religion and Religious Activities*.”

Motion: Trustee Siobhan Hathhorn moved to approve action item 8, *Policy 2103: Religion and Religious Activities*. Trustee Jennifer Walsh seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0; motion carries unanimously. (*Trustee Janet Armstrong was not in attendance for the vote.*)

9. Policy 2165: Early Literacy Targeted Intervention

Ms. Mizell presented action item 9, *Policy 2165: Early Literacy Targeted Intervention*, to the Board of Trustees. This policy has been updated to reflect current legislation, including the removal of lines 33 through 35, clarifying the definition of scholastic literacy and incorporating math into early targeted intervention programs. Ms. Mizell 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 9, *Policy 2165: Early Literacy Targeted Intervention.*”

Motion: Trustee Kay Satre moved to approve action item 9, *Policy 2165: Early Literacy Targeted Intervention.* Trustee Keith Meyer seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0; motion carries unanimously. (*Trustee Janet Armstrong was not in attendance for the vote.*)

10. Policy 3000: Equal Educational Opportunities

Ms. Mizell presented action item 10, *Policy 3000: Equal Educational Opportunities*, to the Board of Trustees. The policy changes reflect Senate Bill 350, which permits school districts and MHSA to prohibit participation of a home-schooled student in extracurricular activities if the student is not a U.S. citizen or a resident of the state of Montana. Ms. Mizell 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 10, *Policy 3000: Equal Educational Opportunities.*”

Motion: Trustee Jenny Murnane Butcher moved to approve action item 10, *Policy 3000: Equal Educational Opportunities.* Trustee Keith Meyer seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0; motion carries unanimously. (*Trustee Janet Armstrong was not in attendance for the vote.*)

11. Policy 3410: Student Health/Physical Screenings/Examinations

Ms. Mizell presented action item 11, *Policy 3410: Student Health/Physical Screenings/Examinations*, to the Board of Trustees. House Bill 599 requires that a district provide parents with notice of the right to opt out of physical or mental health screenings or surveys and to be notified of the results of any such screenings. The policy has been updated to align with this requirement. Ms. Mizell addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented. The Trustees had a discussion centered on potential inconsistencies between Policy 3410 and Policy 2020 regarding parental rights related to mental health screenings. Policy 3410 references a parental opt-out provision for physical and mental health screenings, while Policy 2020 references an opt-in requirement for certain surveys or personal analyses involving personally identifiable information. Trustees expressed concern that the language between the two policies may be contradictory and requested clarification to ensure alignment with one another and with statutory requirements. The Board determined additional review was necessary before taking action and voted to table the policy for further committee discussion.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee entertained a motion to table *Policy 3410: Student Health/Physical Screenings/Examinations*, so it could be referred to the Policy Committee for further review and discussion at a future meeting.

Motion: Trustee Linda Cleatus moved to table *Policy 3410: Student Health/Physical Screenings/Examinations*, so it could be referred to the Policy Committee for further review and discussion at a future meeting. Trustee Kay Satre seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0; motion carries unanimously. (*Trustee Janet Armstrong was not in attendance for the vote.*)

12. Policy 3097: Use of Video Monitoring Cameras

Ms. Mizell presented action item 12, *Policy 3097: Use of Video Monitoring Cameras*, to the Board of Trustees. This policy has been updated to align with parental rights under House Bill 32, allowing video monitoring during events open to the public. At the last Policy Committee meeting, clarifying language was added to specify that no staff member or volunteer may make an audio or video recording of a student without parental permission, unless at a public event. Ms. Mizell addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented. The Trustees had a discussion focused on the revised language addressing when staff or volunteers may record students without parental permission, particularly at events open to the public. Trustees questioned whether certain phrasing—specifically related to “events open to the public” and the placement of “without parental permission”—was grammatically clear and legally precise. Additional clarification was requested to ensure the policy clearly distinguishes between instructional settings, public events, and the district’s use of video surveillance for safety and security purposes. The Board determined the language needed further refinement to avoid confusion or unintended interpretation and voted to table the policy for additional review.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee entertained a motion to table *Policy 3097: Use of Video Monitoring Cameras* so it could be referred to the Policy Committee for further review and discussion at a future meeting.

Motion: Trustee Jenny Murnane Butcher moved to table *Policy 3097: Use of Video Monitoring Cameras* so it could be referred to the Policy Committee for further review and discussion at a future meeting. Trustee Kay Satre seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0; motion carries unanimously. (*Trustee Janet Armstrong was not in attendance for the vote.*)

13. Policy 4332: Display of Flags and Banners on District Property

Ms. Mizell presented action item 13, *Policy 4332: Display of Flags and Banners on District Property*, to the Board of Trustees. This is a new policy, developed to align with House Bill 819, regarding the specific flags and banners that may be displayed on district or school property. Clarifying language was added to specify that the policy does not apply to personal clothing, jewelry or accessories worn by school employees, except where uniform policies or official dress codes apply. Ms. Mizell 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 13, *Policy 4332: Display of Flags and Banners on District Property.*”

Motion: Trustee Siobhan Hathhorn moved to approve action item 13, *Policy 4332: Display of Flags and Banners on District Property.* Trustee Keith Meyer seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0; motion carries unanimously. (*Trustee Janet Armstrong was not in attendance for the vote.*)

14. Policy 5025: Employment and Assignment

Ms. Mizell presented action item 14, *Policy 5025: Employment and Assignment*, to the Board of Trustees. Under House Bill 226, state penalties can be issued to employers for failing to comply with federal immigration laws, and grants Montana Department of Labor and Industry subpoena power to determine compliance. Ms. Mizell 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 14, *Policy 5025: Employment and Assignment.*”

Motion: Trustee Keith Meyer moved to approve action item 14, *Policy 5025: Employment and Assignment.* Trustee Jennifer Walsh seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0; motion carries unanimously. (*Trustee Janet Armstrong was not in attendance for the vote.*)

15. Policy 5075: Termination of Employment

Ms. Mizell presented action item 15, *Policy 5075: Termination of Employment*, to the Board of Trustees. This policy has been updated with a legal reference to House Bill 602. Under House Bill 602, in the process of nonrenewal of a nontenured teacher, if the recommendation for nonrenewal is for financial reasons, this is to be stated in the Board agenda posted before June 1, which is subject to public comment. Ms. Mizell 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 15, *Policy 5075: Termination of Employment.*”

Motion: Trustee Kay Satre moved to approve action item 15, *Policy 5075: Termination of Employment.* Trustee Linda Cleatus seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0; motion carries unanimously. (*Trustee Janet Armstrong was not in attendance*

for the vote.)

The Board of Trustees moved on to hear the Reports.

E. REPORTS

1. Student Representatives Report

Mr. Brock Gardipee, Helena High School Student Representative for the Board of Trustees, presented his Student Representative report. Mr. Gardipee commented, “The start of 2nd semester is going great. Our counseling staff has had a lot of work with schedule changes and making sure students have the credits to graduate, so I would like to thank them. The Academic Support Center is of great use. Students have used it approximately 2,000 times. For those who don’t remember, it’s a place where teachers go during their free periods to assist students with their work, helping them where they need. Two of our special education teachers are spearheading new projects, including a new club, a monthly fitness bingo, and possibly more. They are doing this because we are trying to grow our capabilities as a unified champion school, so we appreciate their efforts.

Recognitions:

- Congrats to Speech and Debate, which at state had three students advance to the semifinals or finals.
- Congrats to DECA, which at state this past weekend had 11 top-eight finalists. International finalists include:
 - Meadow Brown, who received first in one event while placing in two others.
 - Cate Harden, who received first in one event, third in one, and top eight in another.
 - I placed second in one event while also receiving second in another, along with Ellie Clancy and Mackenzie Groom regarding the bond.

The event was amazing, especially since it was my first time attending. We did so well that we are bringing 15 students to Atlanta, Georgia, which is a great number of participants.

Upcoming Events:

- Tomorrow, we have our Winter Prep Assembly, where we will celebrate winter sports teams and groups. There will be games, and either the principal or one of the vice principals will be slimed as a fundraiser for the Angel Fund.
- Our 8th-Grade Visit Day will be held on February 24, allowing students to sign up for clubs or sports while exploring what classes are like.
- On March 2, we are hosting a Freshman Informational Night at the HHS gym to inform parents about upcoming steps for students.

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

Ms. Delaney Lynch, Capital High School Student Representative for the Board of Trustees, was not in attendance, therefore, Mr. Gardipee delivered the report on her behalf.

As we dive into the third quarter, many exciting activities and events are happening at Capital High.

Registration for the 2026–2027 School Year:

- Week of February 9: Current 11th graders (course requests entered 2/13)
- Week of February 16: Current 10th graders (course requests entered 2/20)
- Week of February 23: Current 9th graders (course requests entered 2/27)

RBHI Screener:

Recently, all students at CHS participated in the RBHI mental health screener. The screener was administered during second periods, organized by teachers' last names, and spanned five days. Students answered a variety of questions, ranging from mental health topics to questions about life outside of school and living situations.

National School Counselor Week:

Last week was National School Counselor Week. Thank you to the CHS counseling staff for all the support they provide to students, parents, and staff. The counselors are busy curating next year's schedules, and it was wonderful to celebrate their efforts during this time.

Winter Pep Assembly:

The annual Winter Pep Assembly took place last week. Events included numerous recognitions, student relays, teacher dances, catapult challenges, crowd cheers, and cadet and cheer performances.

Professional Development During PLC Time:

Last Monday, teachers participated in professional development led by the SLT team, using actual literacy examples submitted by other teachers via a Padlet presentation. Each PLC team completed a worksheet while reviewing the examples and submitted it to Mr. Zanto for approval and feedback.

Staff Meetings with Slate/RTA Architects:

On January 26, during the high school teacher records day, each curricular department met with architects to discuss needs and ideas for the upcoming building renovation. The following day, January 27, staff had the opportunity to meet with architects during prep periods to discuss additional details.

Night to Shine – Sponsored by DECA Chapters at Both High Schools:

Get ready to be dazzled by 22 incredibly talented acts! The 33rd Annual Night to Shine, Helena's premier teen talent show, promises an unforgettable evening of creativity, passion, and show-stopping performances. Date & Time: February 17 at 7:00 p.m., Helena Civic Center.

Winter Trades Day Registration – Helena District:

- Date & Time: February 24, 8:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., Fairgrounds Exhibit Hall
- Students are provided lunch, and the district is covering registration fees.

As always, I am looking forward to a great month ahead. Go Bru!

2. **Helena Education Association Report**

Jane Shawn, Helena Education Association (HEA) President, presented the Helena Education Association report. Ms. Shawn reported that HEA is preparing for its upcoming election cycle, with nominations opening next week and concluding at the March general membership meeting. Positions open this year include President, First Vice President, and several Board of Directors seats. She shared that the district’s retirement incentive was well received, with 23 teachers expected to participate over the next two years. Ms. Shawn also met with the Assistant Superintendents to clarify funding and structural questions related to the new Professionalism Program and noted that a clear implementation schedule has been developed. Additionally, she met with Mr. McKay and Ms. Alberts to streamline processes related to pupil instruction days and will continue efforts to improve efficiencies. Ms. Shawn reported the launch of a grassroots “Respect Campaign” supporting paraeducators and education support professionals (ESPs) statewide. Advocacy efforts include urging the Interim Funding Commission to prioritize ESPs in school funding discussions and pursuing legislative changes to allow ten-month school-district employees to access unemployment benefits during the summer months. Finally, Ms. Shawn noted member concerns regarding the potential presence of immigration enforcement agents in the community. She has been in communication with Superintendent Wertz and district administration regarding protocols and is coordinating with the Montana Federation of Public Employees, as well as other statewide organizations, to stay informed and provide guidance to members. Ms. Shawn addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

3. **Facilities & Technology Committee Report**

Trustee Siobhan Hathhorn presented the Facilities & Technology Committee report. Trustee Hathhorn reported that much of the recent committee meeting focused on the Ameresco project and the warehouse lease, which have already been discussed with the Board. On the technology side, she noted that the department remains very busy, operating without a dedicated technology levy and relying on general fund and interlocal resources. Current efforts include accreditation work required by the state, enhancements to the standards-based report cards, installation of software for the federally required NAEP assessments, and ongoing Chromebook repairs and safety/security-related service requests (925 requests completed). The audio system upgrade in the Helena High School gym is scheduled and will require a full week for installation. The team also completed secure door fob access for Kinder Sprouts and is exploring automation of the copy center in a cost-neutral manner. Facilities updates included environmental follow-up at Rossiter related to two significant illnesses. Testing for lead and asbestos has returned favorable results and air quality testing is underway to ensure no environmental concerns. Mr. Verrill continues to work with Staples to manage rising paper product costs. Ongoing projects include scheduled flooring replacements, runoff and ground cover improvements at Central, and repairs related to recent wind damage. Trustee Hathhorn addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

4. **Budget and Finance Committee Report**
Trustee Jenny Murnane Butcher presented the Budget and Finance Committee report. Trustee Murnane Butcher reported that the budget-to-actuals remain in good standing overall. Overtime continues to run over budget due to unfilled custodial positions requiring additional coverage; however, this is not a significant concern and will be addressed in next year's budgeting process. The committee also reviewed the bond projects "Sources and Uses of Funds" report, which provides updates on current versus projected costs as bond projects progress. Clarification was provided that "cost of issuance" includes expenses such as bond counsel fees and advertising related to issuing the bonds. Trustee Murnane Butcher addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

5. **Teaching & Learning Committee Report**
Trustee Jenny Murnane Butcher presented the Teaching and Learning Committee report. Trustee Murnane Butcher reported that the committee reviewed fall student achievement data, providing a snapshot of student performance at the start of the school year. She noted appreciation for the administration's work in establishing strong goals. Winter benchmark data will be presented next month, allowing the committee to compare results and review student growth over time. Trustee Murnane Butcher addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

6. **Policy Committee Report**
Trustee Jennifer Walsh reported that all items reviewed by the Policy Committee were presented to the Board of Trustees this evening.

7. **Health Benefits Committee Report**
Trustee Kay Satre reported that the items reviewed by the Health Benefits Committee were presented to the Board of Trustees this evening.

8. **Wellness Committee Report**
Trustee Linda Cleatus presented the Wellness Committee report to the Board of Trustees. Trustee Cleatus reported that the Wellness Committee conducted the Harvest of the Month survey with 105 fourth-grade students and their families. The survey found that 61% of students knew how to grow local food, and 83% of families recognized the value of eating fruits and vegetables. Sodexo will fund the Harvest of the Month taste test next school year. Parents expressed interest in receiving links to cooking videos or instructional content to help children learn to prepare local foods and recipes. Old Salt has expressed interest in partnering with the Helena School District to provide local beef, and the committee discussed using district kitchens or other facilities—such as PAL, Helena High, or community partners like Foodshare—as educational spaces for cooking demonstrations. Trustee Cleatus also noted an upcoming community wellness fair sponsored by Elevate Montana, to be held at the Myrna Loy from 3:30–5:30 p.m., open to the public with wellness resources and refreshments. Trustee Cleatus addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

9. **Montana School Boards Association Report**
There was no Montana School Boards Association report this evening.

10. **Parent Council Visit Reports**
There were no Parent Council Visit reports this evening.

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

VII. UPCOMING MEETINGS

Board Chair Jennifer McKee reviewed upcoming committee and board meetings with the Board of Trustees and Superintendent Weltz.

VIII. BOARD/SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

Trustees and the Superintendent shared brief remarks, including recognition of student achievements, community engagement, and local events. They noted the breadth of work covered during the meeting, including teaching and learning, budget, wellness, policy, facilities, health, construction, and the school calendar, and acknowledged the board's active involvement and subcommittee structure compared to other districts.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Jennifer McKee adjourned the meeting at 10:27 p.m.

Candice Delvaux, Recording Secretary

Date