



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

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

4:00 p.m.

Jefferson Elementary

MINUTES

ATTENDEES

Trustees

Jennifer McKee, Chair
Jennifer Walsh, Vice Chair
Kay Satre, Trustee
Jenny Murnane Butcher, Trustee
Janet Armstrong, Trustee
Siobhan Hathhorn, Trustee

Others

Rex Weltz, Superintendent
Sam Holman, Business Director
Todd Verrill, Facilities Director
Brice Burton, Jefferson Principal
Candice Delvaux, Executive Assistant
Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director
Taylor Lassiter, Communications Specialist
Gary Myers, Director of Educational Technology
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Becca Leaphart, HEF Executive Director
Jane Shawn, HEA President
Kaitlyn Hess, Data & Federal Programs Director
Justine Alberts, Assistant Superintendent PreK-5
Megan Morris, District Legal Counsel
Several Jefferson Elementary Staff Members
Several Guests of the Public

I. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board Chair Jennifer McKee called the meeting to order at 4:02 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 Brice Burton, Jefferson Elementary School

Mr. Brice Burton, Principal of Jefferson Elementary School, provided a comprehensive overview of the school and reviewed the pamphlet included in the agenda.

2025-26 Demographics

- Kinder Sprouts (1) 18
- Kindergarten (2) 36
- First (2) 40
- Second (2) 39
- Third (2) 39
- Fourth (1) 27
- Fourth/Fifth (1) 17/7
- Fifth (1) 30

- Free & reduced lunch: 25%
- Kid Packs: 25
- Students with IEPs: 40
- Students Receiving Speech: 23
- Students with 504 plans: 10
- Indian Education Tutoring: 13
- McKinney-Vento: 6

Engagement

- Weekly PAX Winners
- Family Engagement – Literacy Nights
- Monthly PAX Leader Assemblies
- Weekly Communication
- Jefferson Parent Council
- Academic SLT Team
 - PD
 - 25.26 Focus & Plan
- Behavior SLT Team
 - PD
 - 25.26 Focus & Plan
- MTSS - Team

Principal Burton presented data on ELA, mathematics, and attendance, and outlined his action plans focused on culture and behavior, mathematics achievement, literacy

development, and family engagement. Principal Burton responded to questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Consent Action Items

1. 2/24/26 Board of Trustees Work Session Meeting Minutes
2. 2/26/26 Board of Trustees Work Session Meeting Minutes
3. Personnel Actions
4. Approval of FY 2025-26 Out-Of-District Attendance Agreements (Non-Resident Students Attending HPS)
5. Acknowledge FY 2025-26 Out-Of-District Attendance Agreements (Helena Resident Students Attending Other School Districts)
6. Resolution to Dispose of Personal Property - Outdated and Obsolete Technology Equipment

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 Jenny Murnane Butcher seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-0; motion carries unanimously.

B. Items for Action

1. **Approval of MOU for Lease of Hawthorne Elementary School to Establish the Hawthorne Community Center**

The Board considered approval of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the lease of Hawthorne Elementary School to establish the Hawthorne Community Center. Superintendent Wertz reviewed the process leading to the proposal, including issuing a request for proposals and receiving a community-based submission for Hawthorne. The proposal, led by local residents, outlines the creation of a nonprofit community center with phased development. The MOU provides a short-term agreement to allow organizers to establish the nonprofit, secure funding, and form a governing structure. The agreement is set to be revisited at the end of July for further consideration.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion to approve action item 1, *Approval of MOU for Lease of Hawthorne Elementary School to Establish the Hawthorne Community Center*.”

Motion: Trustee Kay Satre moved to approve action item 1, *Approval of MOU for Lease of Hawthorne Elementary School to Establish the Hawthorne Community Center*. Trustee Jenny Murnane Butcher seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 5-0; motion carries unanimously. *(Please note that Trustee Jennifer Walsh abstained from voting as she is a Trustee strictly for the high school district, and this action item pertains to the elementary district.)*

2. Approval of Resolutions of Intent to Increase Non-voted Levies

- a. Approval of Resolution of Intent to Increase Non-voted Levies - Elementary District**
- b. Approval of Resolution of Intent to Increase Non-voted Levies - High School District**

The Board considered approval of resolutions of intent to increase non-voted levies for both the Elementary and High School Districts for the 2026–2027 fiscal year. Administration noted that these levies are a routine and legally authorized part of the District’s budgeting process. The Elementary District levy is estimated to generate approximately \$3.67 million with a tax impact of 26.15 mills, while the High School District levy is estimated to generate approximately \$1.84 million with a tax impact of 11.94 mills. Funds from the Building Reserve State Major Maintenance levies are expected to support capital improvements identified in the District’s Deferred Maintenance Report, as well as operational costs related to school safety. It was noted that these figures are preliminary, based on current taxable valuations, and may change prior to final budget adoption in August, particularly if taxable values increase.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion to approve action item 2.a., *Approval of Resolutions of Intent to Increase Non-voted Levies: Approval of Resolution of Intent to Increase Non-voted Levies - Elementary District.*”

Motion: Trustee Jenny Murnane Butcher moved to approve action item 2.a., *Approval of Resolutions of Intent to Increase Non-voted Levies: Approval of Resolution of Intent to Increase Non-voted Levies - Elementary District.* Trustee Kay Satre seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 5-0; motion carries unanimously. *(Please note that Trustee Jennifer Walsh abstained from voting as she is a Trustee strictly for the high school district, and this action item pertains to the elementary district.)*

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion to approve action item 2.b., *Approval of Resolutions of Intent to Increase Non-voted Levies: Approval of Resolution of Intent to Increase Non-voted Levies - High School District.*”

Motion: Trustee Kay Satre moved to approve action item 2.b., *Approval of Resolutions of Intent to Increase Non-voted Levies: Approval of Resolution of*

Intent to Increase Non-voted Levies - High School District. Trustee Jennifer Walsh seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-0; motion carries unanimously.

3. Approval of Elementary Ballot Language for General Fund Operations Levy

The Board considered approval of the ballot language for the Elementary District general fund operations levy for the upcoming election. In accordance with state law, the District must submit finalized ballot language to the county election administrator, including the total levy amount, estimated mills, tax impacts for specified home values, and any durational limits. The proposed levy request is for up to \$953,618, approximately 6.79 mills. If approved by voters, the estimated annual tax impact would be approximately \$5.16 for a \$100,000 home, \$15.48 for a \$300,000 home, and \$33.06 for a \$600,000 home. It was also noted that the District is not eligible to request a general fund operational levy for the High School District, and therefore no high school ballot measure will be pursued.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion to approve action item 3, *Approval of Elementary Ballot Language for General Fund Operations Levy.*”

Motion: Trustee Jenny Murnane Butcher moved to approve action item 3, *Approval of Elementary Ballot Language for General Fund Operations Levy.* Trustee Kay Satre seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 5-0; motion carries unanimously. *(Please note that Trustee Jennifer Walsh abstained from voting as she is a Trustee strictly for the high school district, and this action item pertains to the elementary district.)*

4. Approval of Ballot Language for Technology Levy

a. Helena Elementary Approval of Ballot Language - Technology Levy Election

b. Helena High School Approval of Ballot Language - Technology Levy Election

The Board considered approval of ballot language for technology levy elections for both the Elementary and High School Districts. Superintendent Wertz explained that the levies are necessary to support the ongoing maintenance, replacement, and operation of the District’s existing technology infrastructure, including devices, software, network systems, and cybersecurity, as well as to meet increasing state technology requirements. The proposed levies would provide dedicated funding without expanding current technology capacity. The Elementary District is requesting an increase of \$1.6 million annually for a 10-year term, with estimated annual tax impacts of \$8.66, \$25.97, and \$55.47 for homes valued at \$100,000, \$300,000, and \$600,000, respectively, in addition to the existing perpetual levy. The High School District is requesting an increase of \$850,000 annually for a 10-year term, with

estimated annual tax impacts of \$4.20, \$12.59, and \$26.89 for the same home values, also in addition to its existing perpetual levy. If approved by voters, the levies would take effect July 1, 2026, and expire June 30, 2036.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion to approve action item 4.a., *Approval of Ballot Language for Technology Levy: Helena Elementary Approval of Ballot Language-Technology Levy Election.*”

Motion: Trustee Kay Satre moved to approve the ballot language for the operations, infrastructure, and licensing technology fund levy for the Helena - Elementary District. Trustee Jenny Murnane Butcher seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 5-0; motion carries unanimously. *(Please note that Trustee Jennifer Walsh abstained from voting as she is a Trustee strictly for the high school district, and this action item pertains to the elementary district.)*

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion to approve action item 4.b., *Approval of Ballot Language for Technology Levy: Helena High School Approval of Ballot Language-Technology Levy Election.*”

Motion: Trustee Jennifer Walsh moved to approve the ballot language for the operations, infrastructure, and licensing technology fund levy for the Helena - High School District. Trustee Kay Satre seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-0; motion carries unanimously.

This concluded the review of the Items for Action. The Board of Trustees moved on to final board or superintendent comments.

VI. BOARD OR SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

During final comments, Superintendent Weltz and the Board of Trustees discussed the overall financial impact of the proposed levies, noting estimated monthly and annual costs for taxpayers at various home values. It was acknowledged that the levies represent a significant request to the community; however, they are necessary to maintain current district operations and programs. Board members also noted broader concerns about reliance on local taxpayers due to state-level funding limitations.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Jennifer McKee adjourned the meeting at 5:51 p.m.

Candice Delvaux, Recording Secretary