



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
Budget and Finance Committee**

Lincoln Center
and via Microsoft Teams
Tuesday, April 14, 2026
12:00 p.m.

MINUTES

ATTENDEES

Trustees:

Janet Armstrong, Committee Chair
Jenny Murnane Butcher, Trustee

Others:

Rex Weltz, Superintendent
Jane Shawn, HEA President
Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director
Candice Delvaux, Executive Assistant
Lona Carter, Student Health Services &
Special Education Director
Taylor Lassiter, Communications Specialist
Sam Holman, Business Director
Gary Myers, Director of Educational
Technology
Dr. Justine Alberts, Assistant Superintendent
PreK-5
Dr. Kaitlyn Hess, Assessment and Federal
Programs Director
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent 6-12
Todd Verrill, Facilities Director

I. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was called to order at 12:02 p.m. Following the call to order, members of the Budget and Finance Committee and other attendees introduced themselves.

II. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no general public comment.

III. REVIEW OF AGENDA

No changes were made to the agenda.

IV. REVIEW OF MINUTES

The committee reviewed and accepted the February 10, 2026, Budget and Finance Committee meeting minutes.

V. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/DISCUSSION

A. Budget to Actual Reports

Superintendent Rex Weltz and Business Director Sam Holman presented the current budget-to-actual reports for both the elementary and high school districts. They reported that overall budgets are trending positively with two months remaining in the fiscal year. The elementary district has approximately 3.8% of its budget remaining (about \$1.7 million). While this is a tighter budget, expenditures are being carefully managed, and the District is proceeding cautiously but without concern. The high school district remains in a stronger financial position, with approximately 8.7% remaining (nearly \$2 million). An area of note in the elementary budget is overtime costs (approximately \$30,000 over budget), largely due to a shortage of custodial staff requiring existing employees to work additional hours. This is expected to be addressed in next year's budget planning. Salary and benefit expenditures have improved significantly over time. The elementary district is currently at 88%, down from nearly 98–99% in prior years, allowing for more operational flexibility. The high school district is at 83%, contributing to its overall stronger financial position. Administrators noted that elementary funding remains more constrained than high school funding, due to differences in state funding formulas. This disparity is being discussed at the state level as part of ongoing funding review efforts. Overall, both districts are on track to end the fiscal year in stable condition, with spending trends aligned to projections. Superintendent Weltz and Business Director Holman addressed questions from the committee regarding the financial information presented.

B. Interlocal Fund Financial Activity

Superintendent Weltz and Business Director Holman reviewed the interlocal fund financial activity report and reported that the District has been intentionally conservative in the use of interlocal funds, primarily to demonstrate strong financial reserves in preparation for upcoming bond rating reviews with Moody's. Maintaining these reserves is important as the District anticipates an additional issuance in the elementary district. The interlocal fund has remained relatively stable throughout the year; however, upcoming technology expenditures will significantly impact the balance. Planned purchases include approximately 2,000 Chromebooks (estimated at \$900,000), additional teacher laptops, licensing renewals, and network infrastructure upgrades. As a result, a decrease in interlocal reserves is expected in the coming months, with continued technology-related expenditures anticipated next year. Administrators clarified that bond funds cannot be used for technology purchases, and these costs must be covered through the general fund, interlocal funds, or a technology levy. Without a successful technology levy, the District could face \$3–3.5 million in technology-related costs within the general fund and interlocal budgets next year. Additionally, as the fiscal year concludes, schools and departments may begin utilizing their own interlocal funds for supplies and operational needs, which is typical for this time of year. Overall, the District remains strategic and cautious in managing interlocal resources while preparing for upcoming financial obligations. Superintendent Weltz and Business Director Holman addressed questions from the committee regarding the financial information presented.

C. Bond Budget Update

Superintendent Weltz and Business Director Holman provided a bond budget update, noting that the report is intended to track projected costs and funding over the next three to five years, including upcoming projects such as the stadium. They reported that no significant changes have occurred since the previous update. Current funding sources include bond principal, interest earnings, and bond premiums for both the high school and elementary districts. Approximately \$80,000 in preliminary "soft costs" (e.g., issuance and legal fees) were initially paid from the general fund; the District is exploring whether these costs may be reimbursed through bond funds. While expenditures have remained relatively stable to date, increased financial activity is expected in the coming months. Contracts are being finalized, and construction is anticipated to begin soon, with funds starting to be expended on contractors, professional services, and construction packages (e.g., steel, HVAC, electrical). The District has completed its first bond issuance and anticipates the need for a future issuance for the high school district as project spending accelerates. Additional planning and coordination will be required for this process, including bond rating

considerations. A second issuance for the elementary district is not expected in the immediate future. Overall, the bond program remains on track, with spending expected to increase as projects move into active construction phases. Superintendent Wertz and Business Director Holman addressed questions from the committee regarding the financial information presented.

D. Preliminary Budget Data Sheets and Preliminary General Fund FY27 Budget Projections

Superintendent Wertz and Business Director Holman reviewed the preliminary budget data sheets provided by OPI, which serve as the foundation for developing the District's FY27 budget. District leadership has begun regular budget work sessions to refine projections, including staffing needs, contractual expenses, utilities, retirements, and leaves.

Preliminary projections indicate:

- The elementary general fund budget is projected to increase from approximately \$45.2 million in FY26 to \$46.3 million in FY27, a 2.37% increase contingent on voter approval of the operational levy.
- Without levy approval, the increase would be minimal at approximately 0.26%, significantly limiting budget growth.
- The projected increase does not keep pace with current inflation (~3.5%), creating continued budget pressure.

Additional cost considerations include:

- Estimated 2.5% salary increase across most employee groups.
- Ongoing cost increases in utilities and operations.
- Potential savings from staff retirements and replacement with lower-salaried employees, though these savings are still being evaluated.

For the high school district, the budget is projected to grow modestly from approximately \$25.1 million to \$25.5 million (about 1.5% increase), with similar cost pressures from salaries and inflation. Administrators emphasized that the District will face tight financial conditions moving forward, requiring careful planning and prioritization.

It was also noted that upcoming operational and technology levies are critical. In particular, technology levies would help offset technology costs from the general fund, allowing general fund resources to be used for core operations as intended.

Overall, the FY27 budget remains in early development, with multiple variables still being analyzed as the District works toward a balanced and sustainable budget. Superintendent Weltz and Business Director Holman addressed questions from the committee regarding the financial information presented.

VI. BOARD/SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

Superintendent Weltz discussed efforts to improve public understanding of the District's budget through expanded communication across multiple platforms and by addressing misinformation. The Superintendent also previewed a proposed girls flag football program, initially funded by the Atlanta Falcons, noting strong student interest and minimal ongoing costs. A potential future high school baseball program was briefly mentioned for later consideration, and the meeting concluded with no further discussion.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Budget and Finance Committee Chair Janet Armstrong adjourned the meeting at 12:45 p.m.