



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 Meeting

Tuesday, April 14, 2020 – 5:30pm

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

Attendees:

Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair
Terry Beaver, Board Vice Chair
Sarah Sullivan, Board Past Chair
Siobhan Hathhorn, Trustee
Jeff Hindoen, Trustee
Libby Goldes, Trustee
John McEwen, Trustee
Jennifer Walsh, Trustee
Zyanne Cervantes, CHS Student Representative
Hannah Muszkiewicz, HHS Student Representative

Tyler Ream, Superintendent
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff
Janelle Mickelson, Business Services Administrator
Stacy Collette, Human Resources Director
Tim McMahon, Activities Director
Kalli Kind, Facilities Director
Pat Boles, Technology Director
Sean Maharg, Special Education Administrator
Sean Morrison, Special Education Administrator
Gary Myers, Education Technology Coordinator
Jane Shawn, Helena Education Association President

Guests:

Jonathon Ambarian
Justine Alberts
Jamie Bawden
Timothy Belliveau
Ashten Broadhead
Lolita Carter
Lona Carter
Jenna Clark
Rene Cloninger
Laura Conwell
Brian Cummings
Joslyn Davidson
Jesika Fisher
Michelle Ford
Deb Jacobsen
Meghan Schulte
Willie Shlepp
John Burke
Stephanie Thennis
Richelle Thompson
Kevin Ward
Kaydia Day

Erika McMillin
Karla Miller
Kelley Morand
Carol Morgan
Jill Nyman
Brian Kessler
Shanna Kimball
Trish Klock
Lisa Lowney
Jaime Pandis
Dennis Peterson
Nancy Peterson
Emily Petrik
Paul Phillips
Shannin Preshinger
Shay Coil
Jane Shawn
Jessica Sichelstiel
Stephi Johnson
Tom Kuglin
Brett Zanto
Ella McCullough
Clancy McGowan

I. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was called to order at 5:30pm by Board Chair, Luke Muszkiewicz.

II. REVIEW OF AGENDA

No changes to the agenda were requested.

III. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments were offered.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Items for Action

1. Remote Services Action Plan Update

Dr. Ream stated the only change to the plan was an additional meal delivery site and the adjustment to a Monday/Wednesday/Friday distribution schedule.

Motion: Trustee McEwen moved to approve the Remote Services Action Plan. Trustee Goldes seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None

Board Comment: Trustee Sullivan asked why the deliveries were being made only on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Ms. Ridgway answered it was a staffing and facility issue and agreed to verify that answer with the food services department.

Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

B. Items for Consent

1. Board of Trustees March 10, 2020, Meeting Minutes
2. Board of Trustees March 27, 2020, Special Meeting Minutes
3. Approval of Personnel Actions
4. Approval of Warrants

Motion: Trustee Sullivan moved to approve the items for consent. Trustee Beaver seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None

Board Comment: None

Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

C. Items for Information

1. Remote Services Update: Forthcoming Grading and Graduation Decisions

Dr. Ream described grading discussions as ongoing and based on the following considerations and priorities:

- Students over grades – sensitivity to individual situations
- Removing all barriers to learning
- Teacher insights are vital

Dr. Ream added a few additional points regarding grading:

- Seniors on track to graduate prior to school closure will graduate; graduation status will not be compromised.
- The district was leaning towards a traditional grading scale, but no final decision had been made.

- Students could not drop below 20 credits. Currently, the school district required 23 credits for graduation, but students could submit a petition to graduate with 20 pending extenuating circumstances.
- Grading at the middle schools will align with the high schools.
- Elementary grading practices vary by grade level and site but were moving towards modified standards-based grading, which would help teachers outline what needs to be taught in the fourth quarter, then assess what they taught and what students learned in the fourth quarter which providing actionable data for any needed remediation during the summer and into next year.

Trustee Sullivan asked for confirmation that middle school and high school students could opt for a pass/fail/incomplete rather than the traditional grading scale. Dr. Ream answered it was an option, but no final decision had been made.

Trustee Hathhorne referenced younger middle school students and asked how an incomplete would affect their future GPA. Dr. Ream answered that there was alignment with the Montana University System on the affect, but not at all colleges across the nation. He added he anticipated colleges would be flexible when they saw an incomplete for a fourth quarter class in 2020.

Trustee Sullivan requested clarification that the state has no standardized requirements on grading. Dr. Ream answered that individual districts were able to determine proficiency.

Trustee Beaver expressed his support of a traditional GPA scale, and recommended if school closure continue into the fall, alternatives could be revisited at that time.

Dr. Ream then addressed graduation, stating several plans were being simultaneously developed and added that despite a letter penned by the Office of Public Instruction (OPI), graduation decisions were at the discretion of individual school districts. He added the district was obligated to abide by the recommendations and orders by local health officials what they believed was best for the Helena community. Dr. Ream reiterated there was no singular plan for graduation at this time.

Ms. Cervantes expressed her preference of postponing a ceremony over a digital alternative. Chair Muszkiewicz asked for the student representatives' opinions on a socially distanced ceremony with students and staff with others watching it online. The representatives preferred a socially distanced ceremony over an entirely digital ceremony.

Trustee Sullivan recommended surveying students and parents. Dr. Ream said a decision would continue to be discussed at the high school principals' meetings. He added the district would do everything it could without violating any legal orders.

Trustee Sullivan asked the student representatives for the likelihood of Seniors following social distancing orders at a ceremony. The student representatives replied they felt Seniors would follow those rules.

Trustee Hathhorne said if a ceremony were delayed beyond the normal graduation time, graduates would begin going their separate ways and may not be able to or want to attend and recommended an expedient decision.

Trustee Beaver asked for an estimation on costs for announcements, gowns, etc. Dr. Ream answered that caps and gowns and announcements had likely been ordered. The student representatives agreed.

D. Reports

1. Health Benefits Committee Report

Ms. Collette provided updates from the Health Benefits Committee as follows:

- COVID-19 testing and associated doctors' visits were included in the plan.
- Telemedicine options had been added to the plan, including mental health services.

2. Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA) Report

Board Chair Muszkiewicz praised the association for its advocacy and provided resources and assistance to districts across the state. He said all previously scheduled in-person meetings through June 2021 had been either cancelled or postponed. Chair Muszkiewicz referenced the letter from OPI recommending planning for remote learning through the remainder of the year and postponing graduations that had been cosigned by MTSBA. The association had received pushback regarding that correspondence.

3. Student Representatives Report

Ms. Cervantes relayed the perceptions that while high school students were receiving a decent amount of work, elementary school students were receiving far too much. Dr. Ream replied that he appreciated the feedback, but that was not the target. Elementary teachers had been instructed to assign two assignments per subject per week. He said he would continue to communicate with parents regarding the workload being assigned.

Ms. Muszkiewicz said Helena High counselors had been sending messages to their students and continued to reach out to students, which had been well received. She said it would be helpful for teachers to create weekly schedules for the week. She listed one challenging area as the difference in teachers' opinions on when school would resume. Ms. Muszkiewicz continued that classes had been productive considering the circumstances.

Trustee Walsh said it was important to ensure consistency in internal communications. Dr. Ream agreed, and added that once the governor made his next announcement, the district would communicate internally and externally with a message aligning with the governor's office.

4. Helena Education Association (HEA) Report

Ms. Shawn said teachers were working harder in remote learning than if they were in the classroom, and some HEA members were overwhelmed. According to Ms. Shawn, para-educators felt more utilized than they had prior to spring break. She continued that members were appreciative of the communication from the district. She stated the Montana Federation of Public Employees annual meeting would take place remotely the following

Saturday, and the National Education Conference in early July had not yet been cancelled. Ms. Shawn said the HEA bargaining team continued to meet regularly and would be prepared to negotiate with the district on April 23.

V. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Ream referenced the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding, which expires in 2021. While the district would like to provide summer camps and jump starts for gaps that may be occurring, Dr. Ream said, any shortfalls in property taxes were unknown, so decisions had not been made regarding use of that funding.

Dr. Ream listed current RFPs and their statuses as follows:

- The RFP for 7th Ave. Gym had not been revisited.
- The food services RFP was awarded to Sodexo last week.
- The transportation RFP was ongoing.
- The photocopier RFP was awarded to ITC.

Dr. Ream said no final decision had been made regarding the Vigilante Parade, and current orders and restrictions would guide any decision.

VI. BOARD COMMENTS

No additional comments were offered by trustees.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:54pm by Board Chair Muszkiewicz. The next board meeting will be May 12, 2020.