



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 Program Committee

May Butler Center | 55 S. Rodney Ave
Friday, October 4, 2019 – 12:00pm

MINUTES

ATTENDEES

Committee:

Jeff Hindoién, Committee Chair
Sarah Sullivan, Committee Member
John McEwen, Committee Member

Others:

Tyler Ream, Superintendent
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff
Janelle Mickelson, Business Services Administrator
Stacy Collette, Human Resources Director
Jane Shawn, HEA President
Steve Thennis, Helena High Principal
Brett Zanto, Capital High Principal
Wynn Randall, PAL Principal
Craig Crawford, Adult Education Administrator
Stuart Davis, Montana Radio Company

I. CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chairperson, Jeff Hindoién, called the meeting to order at 12:04pm.

II. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

III. REVIEW OF AGENDA

No changes were requested.

IV. REVIEW OF MINUTES

Mr. Hindoién relayed a requested change from Trustee Chair Luke Muszkiewicz to adjust “standard of living” to “inflationary adjustment” in Paragraph 4 of Page 4.

V. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/DISCUSSION

A. Retirement Incentive Update and Preliminary Financial Calculations

Ms. Collette discussed the current status of the early retirement benefit as follows:

- 55 educators have applied.
- Applicants have been vetted by a list of preestablished criteria established by a committee.
- The top 40 candidates have been notified and must submit their letter of resignation to the Human Resource office by October 11.
- If not all 40 candidates accept by then, additional candidates will be notified by October 18.

Ms. Mickelson estimated a total payout for 40 candidates at \$2,000,000 from the interlocal fund and \$2,200,000 from of the retirement fund. She added that a payout to the top 45 retirees would be \$4,600,000, and once the number of retirees reaches 50, the pay out becomes out of the district's range. Mr. Hindoien asked for confirmation that it would not fiscally possible or responsible for the district to pay out 50 retirees under the current benefit. Ms. Mickelson confirmed.

Ms. Mickelson estimated a cost savings of \$900,000 if the district pays 40 early retirement benefits and \$973,000 if the district pays 45 benefits. Dr. Ream said the district must now decide if it offers the benefit to 45 educators or opens the opportunity to include five administrators.

Mr. McEwen asked if the savings projections took into consideration the costs of hiring new teachers. Ms. Collette answered that projections factored hiring educators at a step six average.

Mr. McEwen asked for an estimated ratio of elementary retirees to high school retirees. Ms. Collette answered that the majority came from the elementary level.

Ms. Sullivan asked if the projections has been based on the current salary matrix and if projections would change once a new matrix was negotiated. Ms. Shawn answered that salaries would be discussed in December as part of negotiations.

Mr. McEwen asked for expectations on the percentage of the top 40 applicants who would accept the offer. Ms. Collette answered she anticipated 75% from the first 40. She said she will know the final names by October 23-24, though not necessarily the final financials.

Mr. Hindoien requested adding the results to a board agenda to give the public an update.

B. Preliminary Program Budget Analysis

Dr. Ream confirmed Todd Watkins would attend the November Budget Committee meeting. He addressed the attending high school administrators and said they were in

attendance to provide feedback on what the district should study in terms of high pupil costs, programs, and courses as they relate to a per student cost analysis.

Ms. Mickelson provided a preliminary program budget analysis document to meeting attendees, stating a remaining budget in the high school funds of 13%. Dr. Ream added that the 65%/35% elementary/high school split had not been factored into the five-year forecast, but that Ms. Mickelson was working on a reforecast that would include the split. Mr. Hindoien requested two documents pertaining to the budget

- an understandable piece for the board and public
- an internal document for administration and operations

Dr. Ream addressed the attending administrators and asked if there were opportunities to share classes among the schools. Mr. Zanto replied that the schools were sharing teachers for German, Latin, Orchestra, one art teacher, and one social studies teacher. He continued that few classes were being shared, adding that a student gives up approximately three class periods to attend a class at a different high school once travel time is factored. Mr. Hindoien recommended working with Todd Watkins to establish a cost analysis based on judgements at the school level.

Ms. Sullivan requested the committee remain sensitive to the potential of cutting funds for classes that may not be full but are reaching students who may not stay in school without them. Mr. Hindoien agreed, and added the need to clarify that the district was not looking to cut programs – it was collecting data and making informed decisions driven by what was best for students.

Dr. Ream asked the group what would be of value moving forward.

- Mr. Hindoien recommended not completing any cost analyses until after seeing the results of the early retirement benefit program.
- Mr. Zanto recommended analyzing required programs prior to examining electives.
- Mr. Thennis said that costs across programs varies substantially, so cost per student will be higher, he referenced specifically the CTE curriculum.
- Mr. McKay referenced the career center, which offers a blend of core and career, could be similarly structured at any site and would be something to consider in the future.
- Mr. McKay agreed with the importance of knowing costs to identify not only the programs on which the district is spending money but also where students need more funds.
- Ms. Sullivan inquired into the possibility of flexible scheduling, specifically for CTE classes.
- Mr. McEwen asked if the district included adults in classes. Dr. Ream answered the Adult Education program was run out of Helena College. He continued that a student over the age of 19 would need an exemption from the board to attend a class, adding that Community Education is separate from Adult Education.

- Mr. Crawford noted a change in the last legislative session for Adult Education funding, which allows for a broader use of that funding, including high school completion.

VI. BOARD COMMENT/SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

None were given.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hindoien adjourned the meeting at 12:57pm. The next meeting will be November 1, 2019.