



Superintendent
Rex Wertz
324-2001

Business Manager
Janelle Mickelson
324-2040

Board of Trustees Summer Retreat

Bryant Elementary School Library-1520 Livingston Avenue-Helena, MT 59601

Tuesday July 13, 2021-8:30 AM

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE – Present unless otherwise noted.

Luke Muszkiewicz-Board Chair
Siobhan Hathhorn-Vice Chair
Janet Armstrong-Trustee
Terry Beaver-Trustee
Elizabeth “Libby” Goldes-Trustee
John McEwen-Trustee
Jennifer McKee-Trustee
Jennifer Walsh-Trustee

Rex Wertz-Superintendent
Josh McKay-Assistant Superintendent
Brian Cummings-Assistant Superintendent of Elementary
Janelle Mickelson-Business Manager
Barb Ridgway-Chief of Staff
Stacy Collette-Human Resources Administrator
Sean Maharg-Special Education Administrator
Gary Myers-Director of Educational Technology
Joslyn Davidson-Curriculum and Instructional Resources Administrator
Bea Kaleva-Legal Representative for The Helena School District

Lona Carter-Jefferson Elementary School Principal
Trish Klock, Bryant Elementary School Principal
Lisa Lowney-Kessler Elementary School Principal

Nick Radley- Central Elementary School Principal
Leticia Wilkins-Warren Elementary School Principal
Sean Morrison- Four Georgians Elementary School Principal
Erin Maxwell- Ray Bjork Principal
Cal Boyle-Helena Middle School Principal
Dave Thennis-C.R. Anderson Middle School Principal
Jilyn Chandler-Vice Principal C.R. Anderson Middle School Principal
Brett Zanto-Capital High School Principal
Kathy Kidder-Vice Principal Capital High School
Stephanie Thennis-Vice Principal Helena High School
Matt Carey-P.A.L Principal

I. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Chair Luke Muszkiewicz called the meeting to order at 8:44 a.m. in the Bryant Elementary Library and started the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. REVIEW OF AGENDA:

The agenda was reviewed by those present.

III. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT: *This is the time for comment on public matters that are not on the agenda. Public matters do not include any pending legal matters, private personnel issues, or private student issues. Please do not attempt to address such issues at this time or you will be ruled out of order. The Board cannot enter into a discussion during General Public Comment.*

No public comment.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A: Consent Action Items

1. Personnel Actions (See Attached)
2. MTSBA Principles & Guidelines (See Attached)
3. MTSBA FY23 Dues Revenue Estimate (See Attached)
4. Nomination of Scott Walter as MTSBA President-Elect
5. Nomination of Tom Billteen as MTSBA Vice-President

Motion: Ms. Siobhan Hathorn moved to approve the 7/13/21 personnel action items. Mr. John McEwen seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None

Vote: 7-0 The motion carried. Mr. Luke Muszkiewicz abstained from voting.

B. Item of Information: Board of Trustees Retreat

1. Introduce Administrative Team

- At 9:00 a.m. Superintendent Rex Weltz lead the trustees, central administration team, and building administration in a team building activity to get to know one another.

2. Discuss Governance Best Practices and Legal Procedural Questions

- Legal representative Ms. Bea Kaleva discussed the role of the board of trustees as well as the rights and responsibilities of a trustee according to Montana Code. Ann. 20-3-324; Helena Public Schools Policy 1005 and 1010. The school board policies have the force and effect of law in Montana as long as they are legally adopted and consistently enforced.
- Limitations of trustees was discussed by reviewing Helena School District policy 1055 which speaks to communication between trustees and staff. All official communications to the Board should be directed to the Superintendent. Board member questions or communications to staff about programs and/or request for information should also be submitted through the Superintendent. Ms. Kaleva said it is important to know where to refer people to that have issues and know your line of communications.
- The text topic mentioned included that a trustee does not have individual authority. It is the Board as a whole that has authority over the school district. The board discussed section 20-3-332: personal immunity and liability of trustees. When acting in their official capacity at a regular or special meeting of the Board or a committee thereof, the trustees of each district are individually immune from exemplary and punitive damages. Actions taken individually could lead to individual liability, which is another good reason why individual trustees should work within the structure of the Board as a whole.
- The discussion then turned to what exactly can the board do. The board has goals, missions, and a vision. This was outlined in Policy 1015.
- It was then discussed the relationship the board has with the superintendent. This is outlined in Policy 1045. The Board gives general guidance to your Superintendent, and your entire school community, through your policy manual, but the Board should also be

willing to meet annually with your Superintendent and set goals for him to meet based on the Board's goals for the upcoming year.

- It was then discussed Policy 6000 in which the Board will evaluate, at least annually, the performance of the Superintendent, using the standards and objectives developed by the Superintendent and Board which are consistent with the district's mission and goals statements. The Board agrees that the evaluation and assessment shall be reasonably related to the job description of the Superintendent and the specific, measurable performance goals and objectives agreed to by the Board in consultation with the Superintendent, by September 1, for the year in question.
- The last item discussed with Ms. Kaleeva was Open Meeting Law. It is outlined in the Montana Constitution, Article II, Sections 9 and 10. Section 9. Right to know. No person shall be deprived of the right to examine documents or to observe the deliberations of all public bodies or agencies of state government and its subdivisions, except in cases in which the demand of individual privacy clearly exceeds the merits of public disclosure. The Constitution contains equally strong language in favor of individual privacy: Section 10. Right of privacy. The right of individual privacy is essential to the well-being of a free society and shall not be infringed without the showing of a compelling state interest.
- The conversation with Ms. Kaleeva closed in discussing seven things a board member really needs to know: the Due Process Clause, Montana's Open Meeting Law, what's delegable by the Board to administrators and what's not, aspects of the "Federalization" of employment law, the important of District policy language, the dynamics, politic, and unique responsibilities, of being appointed to a public entity responsible to the citizens of the multiple school districts to act in the best interest of the special education students, and last of all "do what you know is right, not what at you think is right".

C. OPEN DISCUSSION

1. At this time, the attendees of the meeting held an open-ended discussion over lunch regarding matters of importance to trustees.
 - Trustee Ms. Janet Armstrong asked if there is a plan to address any COVID-19 variances that might be coming our way and how will we address the community? Superintendent Rex Weltz responded that we will work the health department on a plan, and we will notify the community once we have that plan.

- Mr. Muszkiewicz asked if the school district is making the phone calls if students need to quarantine. Chief of Staff Ms. Barb Ridgway said at this time the health department will make that call.
- We discussed feedback on 21-22 Helena Schools Draft Operations Plan. Ms. Hawthorn commented that she believes we have less responses from people in the valley because they might not want to take the survey. She said that we need to keep in mind that there are all a lot of people that do not fit in the profile of the ones that fill out surveys. Ms. Armstrong said it would be helpful to let the community know some of the federal guidelines that we have to go through to serve kids in our district.
- Masking in the district was discussed. Mr. Muszkiewicz said at this time masks are optional except they are federally required on our school buses. Superintendent Weltz said we can do a better job communicating information to the community to help keep them in the know. Mr. Muszkiewicz asked if there were any issues with students wearing masks during summer school for the first 3 days or on buses. Assistant Superintendent Brian Cummings said he did not see any issues arise.
- The next item discussed was that recommendations for how far apart students will need to be in the classrooms need to be discussed in the future.
- Human Resources Director Stacy Collette says she fully expects to have conversations with staff members before September 1, 2021, regarding staff safety guidelines, quarantining, etc. It will be a different environment for our employees.
- Mr. Muszkiewicz asked is there anything as a school system we can do to make it easier for families to get vaccinated? Ms. Ridgway said an option is to do some on campus vaccine clinics before school starts, but the best way is to speak to your local health care provider about getting vaccinated.
- Trustee Libby Goldes asked how are we identifying the needs of children who fell behind during the pandemic? Ms. Goldes thinks we need to promote that to the public that we are helping kids catch up. Superintendent Weltz responded that our summer school program is helping fill those learning gaps from COVID.

- Ms. Hawthorn asked if we have looked at any data showing the best way to reach the public via communication? Superintendent Weltz said every venue is important and that we should hit them all such as email, social media, radio, etc. The district has also hired an Information Officer to relay communication to the district and the community.
- Ms. Goldes asked if we still had a survey contract with Panorama? Ms. Ridgway responded that we still have that service, and that is the mechanism with how we survey our community and staff.
- Trustee Jennifer Walsh asked what our goal of responses from the community survey is. Superintendent Weltz said right now our survey responses were at 641, but we would like to be higher. Mr. McKay said a quick outline of communication from the principal sent to families rather than a PDF from the secretary would be read more he believes. The user interface needs to be very easy for parents.
- Mr. Muszkiewicz mentioned critical race theory in society right now. What is our district/ administrative response to this? Superintendent Weltz said the cabinet will discuss this and come together with a one-page district response. Mr. Muszkiewicz said he believes we should be prepared with a document with answers in case the public comes forward with questions regarding this topic.

D. DISCUSS STRATEGIC PRIORITIES & COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES

1. At this time, the board provided Superintendent Weltz input regarding their strategic priorities and discussed priorities and schedule for board committees. Superintendent Weltz said that the strategic priorities should be consolidated and cleaned up to make it an easy one-page document to help our parents understand what we are doing in our district. Below is the concept of the one-page strategic priorities document:

A) Academics-social emotional needs of our students and action steps

B) Building strong professional relationships with our staff and our community. Personal connections which is the driver of all success. PAXs good behavior.

C) Communication- essential in the functions of how we get stronger as a district.

D) Developing consistent and strong systems in operations and sustainable budgets.

F) Facilities- our structure-having great facilities.

- The Trustees, Administrative team, and Superintendent then entered discussion regarding strategic priorities and committee objective. Mr. Muszkiewicz said he likes that this document would live on one page that the entire community can see. He asks that it be a format change and does not want to lose the good work that was put into creating the strategic priorities. Ms. Goldes said we should review strategic priorities and committee objectives every year.
- Superintendent Weltz asked what a priority for the board coming out of a pandemic and moving forward? Mr. McEwen said academics and making sure kids are caught up. Mr. Beaver said do we know what a second grader missed socially during the pandemic and how are we going to accommodate that. How can we help their social, emotional growth? What has every grade level missed due to COVID? He said we are obligated as a school district to help support this.
- Mr. Cummings said the social and emotional piece is built into the academics but maybe it needs to be mentioned more.
- Mr. McKay said we want kids to know they are not broken or behind from COVID. Just letting them know they are going to be alright; and everyone went through this.
- Ms. Collette said it was amazing that we were able to put a device in every child's hand, and they were able to connect socially online and learn amazing technical skills.
- Mr. Muszkiewicz said regarding communication during the pandemic we did well with our website and social media to reach people.

- Mr. Beaver said there should be a way for all board members to be in the loop with what is going on in the district. Superintendent Wertz said every Tuesday at 10 he meets with the executive committee for coffee. Rex said he would set up a time to meet with any board member at that time for a 2 on 1, for 1 hour if it stays under 3 board members at a time.
- Mr. McEwen mentioned regarding the Facilities plan it needs to be a standalone priority. Superintendent Wertz said there will be another meeting in a few weeks, and we will create a master plan for this. Mr. McEwen said we need to look at the priority list of needs regarding the facility needs. We need to know all our facility needs.
- Ms. Goldes said every 10 years we should review our boundaries and it might be great for us if we communicate it to the district.

E. DISCUSS BOARD SELF-EVALUATION RESULTS

1. Mr. Muszkiewicz then discussed the board self-evaluation results. He said that board meetings and relationships felt very positive. That everyone here wants to do what is best for kids, and that it extends to the community.
2. Areas of improvement were discussed and how they communicate to the district. Muszkiewicz said it is very important to have committees meeting regularly with important work. Mr. McEwen said early notification for the board is helpful. Mr. Beaver said maybe there should be a place in Strategic Planning “to put fires out”. Ms. Hawthorn recommended that if we must deal with COVID again the district should hire a COVID Coordinator so the Superintendent can focus on his duties. Ms. Armstrong said to have more time to discuss consent action items would be helpful, along with the details.

F. Superintendent Expectations & Interim Evaluation

The Board of Trustees went into a closed session to discuss Superintendent Expectations & Interim Evaluation at p.m. (Personnel Specific: This portion of the meeting was closed because the demands of individual privacy clearly exceed the merits of public disclosure. MCA 2-3-203)

V. BOARD COMMENTS

None

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The next Regular Board Meeting will be held on August 10, 2021.

Candice Delvaux, Recording Secretary

Date