



**Superintendent**  
Rex Weltz  
324-2001

**Business Manager**  
Janelle Mickelson  
324-2040

## **Board of Trustees Meeting**

Capital High School  
100 Valley Dr, Helena, MT 59601  
And on TEAMS

**Tuesday, September 14th, 2021**  
5:30 p.m.

### **MINUTES**

**ATTENDANCE – Present unless otherwise noted.**

Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair  
Siobhan Hathhorn, Board Vice Chair  
Jennifer Walsh, Trustee  
John McEwen, Trustee  
Terry Beaver, Trustee  
Elizabeth “Libby” Goldes, Trustee  
Janet Armstrong, Trustee  
Jennifer McKee, Trustee  
Rylie Schoenfeld, Helena High School Representative  
Eliza Lay, Capital High School Representative

Rex Weltz, Superintendent  
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent  
Brian Cummings, Assistant Superintendent  
Janelle Mickelson, Business Manager  
Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff  
Gary Myers, Technology Administrator  
Stacy Collette, Human Resources Administrator  
Jane Shawn, HEA President

Many guests of the Helena Community

## **I. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **II. REVIEW AGENDA**

Trustee Libby Goldes proposed a change to the 8.10.21 board meeting minutes. It was determined that under IV. New Business-B. Consent Action Items-1. Approval of 8.10.21 Board Meeting Minutes would be moved to IV. New Business-B. Items for Actions-6. Approval of 8.10.21 Board Meeting Minutes.

## **III. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Superintendent Rex Weltz recognized how well the first weeks of school went and how proud he was of administration, staff, nurses, students, and our community.

Mr. Weltz recognized the Capital High Volleyball Team and their coach Rebecca Cleveland who also teaches at CR Anderson. The Capital High Volleyball Team have been recognized by St. Peter's Hospital as a \$10,000 donor and will have a new donor recognition display in the remodeled Cancer Center. St. Peter's Hospital is very grateful for the generous donations over the last ten years made by the Capital High Volleyball teams. The support of the coaches and student athletes for the Cancer Treatment Center and Breast Cancer Awareness have been significant.

Mr. Weltz recognized Mr. Richard Franco and his wonderful efforts in orchestrating open enrollment for the entire district.

Mr. Weltz recognized Kessler Elementary and the great work of the Kessler staff. Kessler Elementary was the first Central office site visit of the year.

Lastly, Mr. Weltz recognized the Helena Education Foundation, it's sponsors, and the Director of the HEF, Lisa Cordingley. The Helena Education Foundation is giving a new, hardcover book to every Helena Public Schools first-grader this fall through its annual Fabulous Firsts program. The long-running program helps students discover the joy of reading as they cherish a brand-new book of their very own.

Mr. Weltz discussed new business in his superintendent report including covid focus and planning, as well as planning around busing, drivers, and routes. Mr. Weltz also discussed new business around instructional coaching, district priorities, and fall district wide benchmarking.

Superintendent Weltz's report concluded with a summary of his outreach and meetings that he has been a part of over the past month. This includes welcoming 45 new teachers at our New Educators Breakfast, attending the Jeremy Bullock Safe Schools Summit, participating in the AA Superintendent Weekly call, participating as a Hometown Helena Speaker, meeting with the Teacher Advisory Council, attending a meeting with the Carrol College President and CEO of Shodair, participating in transportation meetings, meeting with the OPI Federal Programs Director, participating in HEA meetings, participating in meetings with St. Peters Health and Lewis and Clark Public Health, and participating in site visits all across the district.

#### IV. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Nicole Steeneken currently works in public safety, is a former educator, and a parent of two children in the Helena School District. Ms. Steeneken commented. We are all interested in doing what is best for our children. I would like to talk about the carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) build up in masks. The OSHA Technical Manual states: “Carbon dioxide is classified as an asphyxiant gas. In the atmosphere, CO<sub>2</sub> normally exists at concentrations between 300 and 700 ppm. Larger gas-phase concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> may produce signs and symptoms of increased respiratory rate, lassitude, sleepiness, headache, convulsions, dyspnea, sweating, dizziness, or narcosis.” Furthermore, levels of 1,000 ppm or greater “indicates inadequate ventilation; complaints such as headaches, fatigue, and eye and throat irritation will be more widespread; 1,000-ppm should be used as an upper limit for indoor level.” Numerous demonstrations have revealed CO<sub>2</sub> levels well in excess of the 1,000-ppm indoor threshold associated with wearing masks and facial covering. While these levels are deemed acceptable by NIOSH for short-term (maximum of 15 minutes), our children are being exposed to these levels for 6 hours a day at school. When faces are covered with typical face coverings/masks, emotional reading is severely impaired.

Serena Carley is a grandmother of two children in the Helena School District. Ms. Carley commented. I want to address the numbers that caused this mask mandate. I looked into what constitutes a high risk. They take the number of positives divided by the number of tests that have been performed. So, if you only have 100 tests and 1 person tests positive, then they are telling you that you need to shut down because 1 person in your community has COVID. Right now, the CDC says we have 338 cases. If you divide that by the 7,000 people that are in Lewis and Clark County, that is .005. My daughter who is a teacher said that every single teacher she knows is willing to wear a mask, so our kids don’t have to. I take care of a little boy who was life flighted because he had bacterial tracheitis caused by a staph infection. A study done in Israel said staph infection was one of the major things seen in young children caused by mask wearing because they cannot keep the masks clean. We need to make the decision based on our own research and one size does not fit all.

Chad Larson is a parent of a child in the Helena School District. Mr. Larson commented. This mask thing is a problem. You said that our kids are okay going to school every day, and that they are happy, but my daughter is not. She comes home everyday crying, with a headache every night because of these masks. Please deal with this.

Barbara Calahan is a mother of two students at Capital High School. Ms. Calahan commented. 47 NIH studies say masks don’t work to prevent the spread of a virus and 26 more studies that you can find on the NIH website speak about the harm that they do to the wearer, especially children. It is mute because you are not making decisions based on that. Mandating a medical device, or PPE without a license is against the law. But that is what you insist on doing. You leave us no choice but to deal with that issue in the courts. The second thing I would like to bring up is why is the Pledge of Allegiance no longer being done in the schools in the Helena School District? This should be part of our children’s lives every single day. That needs to be fixed.

Diana Helfrich is a mother of four children in the Helena School District. Ms. Helfrich commented. I am going to touch on the masks and the Pledge of Allegiance. My son in sixth grade has decided to join band for the first time. He wants to play the trombone. He came home on the first day and had a mask to play with his instrument. How are you going to learn to play an instrument with a mask? He said Mom if

I have to do this, I don't want to learn how to play an instrument. My son should have a fair chance at the arts. This mask that doesn't help anybody is going to hinder my child's ability at the arts. It's not fair and it isn't right. There is no reason not to be saying the Pledge of Allegiance. We are Americans.

Heidi Keaster is a parent of children in the Helena School District. Ms. Keaster commented. Once the vaccine comes out for children, I believe we should unmask our elementary children. You can not wear a cloth mask at a hospital now, so why should we be wearing masks if they are not surgical, N95 masks. The virus penetrates through 97% of the cloth masks. So why are we putting them on children? I don't think children are transmitting it. I don't think we should have masks on our kids.

Erik Martini is a father of three children in the Helena School District. Mr. Martini commented. I'd like to discuss Critical Race Theory and if it is being taught in the school district. It was my understanding that the district was going to prepare a one-page district response regarding Critical Race Theory. I have not seen that. Where is this document at? The other thing I wanted to touch on is masking. I still think we should leave that up to parents to decide whether we want to mask or not. Masking doesn't work for kids, and I'll tell you why. Kids touch everywhere and then they touch their faces, and then they touch the mask. The mask doesn't work. I got a call last week that my son was a close contact of another student who had COVID. Why is this still happening if they are wearing masks? It's because it doesn't work.

Delicia Larson is a substitute teacher and a mother of children in the school district. Ms. Larson commented. My daughter comes home crying and getting headaches a lot. It is very emotional and hard to talk to her about it. She didn't want to go back to school when masks were mandated again. Why do we not get this choice as parents to make this decision for our kids? Kids are more likely to die by suicide than by COVID. Let the parents decide for their own kids.

That concludes public comment.

#### **IV. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Items for Information-Policy Background-**These six polices are being presented for information (first reading). These are either existing or new policies that need to be revised or adopted as a result of recent legislation. Chief of Staff, Barb Ridgway, proceeded to go through the six policies with the board.

1. 2016 Human Sexuality Instruction

This new policy is required by Senate Bill 99 which set forth specific requirements for the content of human sexuality curriculum. The policy allows a parent or guardian to withdraw a child from instruction or an organized school function regarding human sexuality instruction and classifies the withdrawal as an excused absence. There is one change noted on lines 18 through 19. The policy requires parents and guardians to be notified no less than 48 hours prior to holding an event or assembly or introducing materials for instructional use. The policy also requires school districts to notify parents or guardians in advance of instruction of 1) the basic content of the district's or school's human sexuality instructions; and 2) the right to withdraw the student from the instruction. The policy requires school districts to make curriculum materials used in human sexuality instruction available for public inspection before use and prohibits a school district or its personnel from offering, sponsoring, or furnishing any course materials or

instruction relating to human sexuality or sexually transmitted disease if the person or entity provides abortion service. The policy also defines “human sexuality instruction.”

2. 3000 Equal Educational Opportunities

This policy has been revised to add language describing how the district will not prevent students in private or homeschool from participating in extracurricular activities. It also addresses new requirements in House Bill 702 which prohibits discrimination based on vaccine status.

3. 3022 Children of Military Families

This policy incorporates language from House Bill 68 which allows school enrollment for children of relocated military families. The trustees shall assign and admit a child whose parent or guardian is being relocated to Montana under military orders to a school in the district and allow the child to preliminarily enroll in classes and apply for programs offered by the district prior to arrival and establish residency.

4. 5000 Equal Employment Opportunity and Non-Discrimination

This policy has been revised to add language about how Covid-19 vaccine status will not be used as a basis to deny or allow equal opportunity to employment in line with new requirements in House Bill 702 which prohibits discrimination based on vaccine status.

5. 5100 Breastfeeding in the Workplace

This policy has been changed to reflect regulatory changes governing appropriate and suitable accommodations of breastfeeding students and employees.

6. 7062 Outdoor Air Quality

In this policy the changes reflect recent regulatory changes governing outdoor activities during periods of poor air quality.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Thank you, Barb, for your incredible leadership in our policy services and I want to thank Trustee Goldes for chairing the policy committee, and I want to thank the members of the policy committee.

Trustee Siobhan Hathorn commented. How many students have taken up the opportunity to enroll in extracurriculars that are getting their major education from private or homeschool?

Superintendent Rex Weltz responded. I don't have the exact number, but I know of at least one. I can find out the exact answer from Athletic Director Tim McMahan.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. I want to give a shout out to Athletic Director Tim McMahan. He has worked very hard and answered a lot of questions from homeschool and private school parents regarding this opportunity and he has done a great job.

Trustee Libby Goldes commented. You are correct, Tim McMahan has had to face some challenges as he has worked with Montana High School Sports. Some of their criteria also enters into this. It has been a complicated process for the district. I also want to thank Barb for her guidance in getting us through all of these, as well as my fellow trustees on the committee.

Trustee Janet Armstrong commented. I want to comment regarding Policy 2016 Human Sexuality Instruction. I used to think this was just based upon health, but this policy can also relate to special topics in other areas. We are going to have to really educate our community to be aware of this policy and to make sure we are following the 48 hours. The definition has broadened. That is something I would like everyone to be aware of.

## **B. CONSENT ACTION ITEMS**

2. Approval of Personnel Actions
3. Approval of Warrants
4. Approval of Out of District Attendance Agreement
5. Acknowledgment of Out of District Attendance Agreement

**Motion:** Trustee Siobhan Hathhorn moved to approve the consent action items two through five. Trustee John McEwen seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 7-0 motion carries. Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz abstained from voting.

## **C. ITEMS FOR ACTION**

Chief of Staff, Barb Ridgway, commented. The first five policies listed below are part of an overall review of Series 1000, "School District Organization" being conducted by the Policy Committee. These five policies were presented for information in May of 2021 and are now presented for action.

1. 1027 Board Member Conflict of Interest

Additional language is being recommended to clarify what is meant by connected by blood within the 4<sup>th</sup> degree or by affinity to the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree. Included is a chart that provides clarity, but the chart is not being recommended for inclusion in the policy.

**Motion:** Trustee Libby Goldes moved approval of Policy 1027 as amended. Trustee John McEwen seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 8-0 motion carries unanimously.

2. 1035 Board Development and Self Evaluation

There is a significant change to this policy. New language establishes the Board will conduct an annual self-assessment. Current language states the Board may conduct a self-evaluation.

**Motion:** Trustee Siobhan Hathhorn moved to approve Policy 1035 as amended. Trustee Libby Goldes seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 8-0 motion carries unanimously.

3. 1040 Board Member Expenses

Updated and clarifying language is being recommended as noted.

**Motion:** Trustee John McEwen moved approval of Policy 1040 as amended. Trustee Jennifer McKee seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 8-0 motion carries unanimously.

4. 1055 Communication To and From the Board

The Policy Committee is recommending that “digital communication” be used rather than electronic mail.

**Motion:** Trustee Libby Goldes moved approval of Policy 1055 as amended. Trustee Siobhan Hathhorn seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 8-0 motion carries unanimously.

5. 1060 Committees

Language is being recommended establishing that trustees who are members of committees may participate remotely while retaining the same privileges, rights, and responsibilities as if the trustees were physically present.

**Motion:** Trustee John McEwen moved approval of Policy 1060 as amended. Trustee Jennifer McKee seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 8-0 motion carries unanimously.

6. Approval of 8.10.21 Board Meeting Minutes

Trustee Libby Goldes commented. On page 11, at the last line of the last full paragraph I would like to have the eight changed to a twelve to reflect what I said.

**Motion:** Trustee John McEwen moved approval of the 08.10.21 Board Meeting Minutes as amended. Trustee Siobhan Hathhorn seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 8-0 motion carries unanimously.

## D. REPORTS

1. Helena Education Association Report

Jane Shawn, President of the Helena Education Association, commented. One of the biggest things that our teachers are concerned about is the lack of COVID leave. I've already had a member who has talked to me about that they have already been out for eight days and used up eight days of sick leave out of ten already due to being sick with COVID. That is the biggest thing that I will be working with Mr. Weltz on. He has been very cognizant that this is a big issue for teachers and paras.

2. Budget & Finance Committee Report

Committee Chair John McEwen commented. The budget committee met last Friday, and we had a presentation by Gary Myers, Director of Information and Technology, outlining a proposal for a change in the technology levy. Currently there is a permanent levy that we collect about a million dollars a year between the two districts, elementary and secondary. There is an opportunity in state law to put a levy before the voters for a ten-year levy. Gary outlined some numbers and analyses about the performance of our technology apparatus since 2005 when the first technology levy came about. At the meeting we talked numbers, tax policy and some analyses. At a future meeting the Superintendent will bring forward a proposal on the levy idea for technology.

3. Teaching & Learning Committee Report

Committee Chair Jennifer McKee commented. This was a great committee meeting. We talked about Instructional Framework. There is statistical analysis applied to the various ways that teachers and school systems can best use their time in the classroom to maximize every single minute to get a year or more worth of learning out of a year of teaching. The Instructional Framework is this phrase applied to how in Helena this year that is now being applied. Those statistically analyzed methods are being applied in every single classroom. We were doing it in certain schools on a pilot basis for the past couple of years, and this year it is working so well, and everyone is so happy. These are not sweeping changes, they are very subtle, but they start a child learning the minute they walk in the door. It is simple things like posting an agenda in a uniform way, and an age-appropriate way of showing what is going to happen that day. They have been studied to show that this is how you maximize every single minute and that is happening in Helena this year. There is so much happening in the classroom.

4. Policy Committee Report

Committee Chair Libby Goldes commented. We were really busy, and I really appreciate the time and dedication of all the staff members, especially Barb, and my fellow trustees John and Janet.

5. Facilities & Maintenance Committee Report

Committee Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. Our facilities meeting has been pushed back a week and we will be meeting tomorrow. If all goes well at the next board meeting, I will have two meeting reports to give.

6. Health Benefits Committee Report

Committee Chair John McEwen commented. No report. Health Benefits has not had a meeting yet, but it is coming up.

7. Montana School Boards Association Report

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. The MTSBA Board of Directors on which I am honored to serve and represent Helena, held our first in person board meeting in August. It was the first time the board has met in over 18 months, since before the pandemic. It was a hybrid meeting, but most directors were able to travel to Helena and meet in person and we held almost the entire meeting outside. It was great to engage with

directors from around the state from districts large and small all-around Montana and continue to discuss what we all have in common and how to advocate for our kids. The Montana Conference for Educational Leadership, unfortunately, due to the COVID situation in the state, deemed that an in person meeting here in Helena was not in the best interest of the membership. That is going to be converted to a virtual meeting. The MTSBA resolution process is a foundational element of MTSBA legislative agenda. We have delayed the resolution deadline for districts to submit resolutions. Understandably districts are focused on reopening their schools, and dealing with COVID, and we really have not had a lot of member district resolutions submitted. We will try and extend that to the spring and get some more engagement around our legislative advocacy.

8. Student Representatives Report

Rylie Schoenfeld, Helena High School Representative, commented. October is Mental Health Awareness Month, so awareness and information are being provided this month and next month to students and staff. Our yearly suicidal signs staff training was conducted this morning, and I heard that was successful. In October and early November, we will be doing Youth Aware Mental Health Lessons. We are getting ready to do the BASC screening assessment for risk among students at HHS. This assessment can help staff, counselors, and administrators become aware of students that may be struggling below the surface and get the help that they need. The NAMI walk will be held soon, and a lot of HHS students will be attending that. Last week the iREADY assessment was given and data from that can help teachers set goals this year. Mr. Thennis said we had encouraging results from our test last year through COVID. Our first cross town sporting event will be tomorrow, for our soccer game. The rest of the fall sports have had great starts.

Eliza Lay, Capital High School Representative, commented. Capital High also provided iREADY testing and assessed all 9<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup> graders last week. The ultimate goal from this was to create literacy goals from the data and use PLC time to provide goal driven professional development for teachers of all curricular areas. On the 16<sup>th</sup> the teachers will have an initial iREADY data review in the school leadership team meeting. This information will be presented during PLC on Monday, September 20<sup>th</sup> to staff members, and next steps will be discussed in light of such data. We now have two instructional coaches, one for literacy and one for math. Besides leading our focus on instruction, they are also completing instructional rounds. Johnna and Marissa will be in and out of classrooms to gather initial data to help inform our discussions around setting an instructional goal. This goal will be developed with the guidance and input of the SLT, then building wide. PD will be offered, and Johnna and Marissa will continue their work with individual teachers and departments. We completed our first evacuation drill to our primary evacuation area at Northwest Park. We also completed a shelter in place, and today we had our first lock down drill. We have fifteen students signed up for online classes through Edgenuity, some are full time, and some students are taking classes to try and complete credits necessary to ensure they can graduate this year. While masks are recommended, about ten to fifteen percent of students are wearing them, and the majority of staff members are wearing masks. Things have gone very smoothly so far. Also new to Capital High School are controlled access doors throughout the day and if you are one

minute late to class, you must get buzzed in. Students are getting used to our control access doors, but such a transition takes time. There are four entrances with controlled access during the day, and they are open during passing periods as well as lunch time. The doors by the gym area are not open for unsupervised student access until after 3:15 p.m. for sports. Doors unlock at 7:15 a.m. for zero period, and then unlock again at 8:15 a.m. for first period. On the first day of school Bruin Beginnings went well and Mr. Zanto would like to thank all the upperclassman who came in early this school to welcome the incoming freshman and new upperclassman of 2025. We currently have 372 freshmen and 1,360 students. This is the most students that we have had in a long time. Fall sports are doing well. Our theater department started rehearsals for our play on Friday.

## **VII. BOARD COMMENTS**

Trustee Jennifer McKee commented. This is our first time back together since the school year started. I wanted to publicly acknowledge the huge effort from the cooks to the teachers to the principals, and the parents and the kids who pulled this school year together. It's been a huge success. It feels like a year devoted to learning and growing. Again, I just wanted to thank everyone and every parent and every kid who made it happen.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. I just wanted to say I really appreciated public comment tonight. It was respectful, it was challenging, and it was personal. I've marked some things down here for follow up, and I just really appreciate everyone participating.

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

The board meeting adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

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Candice Delvaux, Recording Secretary      Date