

Hellgate Elementary Board of Trustees
Regular Meeting April 13th, 2023
12:00 p.m.

OPENING

The Board of Trustees of Hellgate Elementary School District #4 met in special session on Monday, April 13th, 2023. The meeting was held in-person and available via Zoom. The meeting was called to order by Board Chairman, Tom McLaughlin. Trustees participating were: Tom McLaughlin, Tom Cook, Rich Thornock, Rod Sharkey, Kate Walker and Diane Beck. Trustee Lori Christensen was absent for the meeting. Superintendent Molly Blakely and District Clerk Justine Reese were present for the meeting. District staff participating were Julie McCarthy-McLavery (Building 2 Principal), Jamie Courville (Building 4 Principal) Kelsey Salmela (payroll clerk), Sara Birmingham (teacher and HEEA co-president), and Brayden Byrne (school nurse). Peggy Young from Payne West was also in attendance via zoom/phone call. There up to 14 guests/participants in the meeting, in-person and via zoom.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

HEEA

There was no update provided by the HEEA.

RECOGNITION OF STUDENTS AND STAFF

There were no recognitions.

BOARD CORRESPONDENCE

There was no review of correspondence.

REQUEST TO CONSIDER HEALTH INSURANCE CHANGE:

A motion was made by Rod Sharkey to table the Superintendent's recommendation to accept the health insurance quote presented by the health insurance carrier Joint Powers Trust, for the 2023-2024 school year (full details in board packet).

Background: Historically, Hellgate Elementary has contracted with Montana Unified School Trust (MUST) to provide the district offered health insurance coverage through Blue Cross Blue Shield. Over the past three years the district has experienced an average increase of ~4% per school year in health insurance rates. MUST released the district's 2023-2024 rates at the end of March, with an overall rate increase of 14% compared to the 2022-2023 school year rates. This will increase employee contributions anywhere from 25% to 51% (subject to plan and participation details). The district also has a long-standing partnership with Payne West to broker health insurance carriers and solicit insurance quotes from reliable and qualified vendors. It was requested by the district that Payne West seek out comparable health insurance carriers that are able to provide similar or equivalent coverage as MUST currently provides. Joint Powers Trust (JPT) supplied the most competitive health insurance coverage and rates. The average impact to employees will be a decrease of 9-13% from current rates, in individual's monthly contributions (subject to plan and participation details). JPT operates in a similar manner as MUST, in that the health insurance program the district is considering is pool-funded. JPT is different in a variety of ways compared to MUST, but the most prominent difference is JPT's health insurance provider is EBMS. The district has completed extensive research into the ensuring the coverage will be a similar/equivalent product. The MUST and JPT quotes have been included in the board packet, along with a cost comparison between the 22-23 school year and the rate changes anticipated.

The discussion began with Superintendent Blakely providing a detailed timeline of events that has led the district to the current question of changing insurance providers. She described a meeting that occurred on Thursday, April 12, 2023 with MUST Chief Executive Officer: Andy Holmlund, Marketing and Sales Director:

Jeff Goody, Field Representative: Fabian Deneault, Tom McLaughlin, Superintendent Blakely, Justine Reese, and Kelsey Salmela. The discussion was to negotiate down the originally quoted insurance increase of 14%. Andy Holmlund negotiated down to a rate increase of 8% effective July 1, 2023, the meeting ended. There was conversation within the Trustees about the longevity of the District's working relationship with MUST. Peggy Young (Insurance Broker from Payne West) answered a variety of questions that the Trustees and the district employees in attendance had. Sara Bermingham (teacher and co-president of HEEA) reiterated the HEEA was in support of the change. All competitive quotes were reviewed by the Trustees in the meeting. The motion was seconded by Tom Cook. Voting in favor of the motion were: Rich Thornock, Tom Cook, Rod Sharkey, Kate Walker and Diane Beck. Voting against the motion was Tom McLaughlin. The motion passed with a quorum.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were no Committee Reports discussed.

PRINCIPALS' REPORTS

There were no Principal Reports discussed.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

The next regular meeting of the Board will be May 8, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 12:54 p.m.

Tom McLaughlin, Board Chair

Justine Reese, Business Manager/Clerk