



# MONTANA SCHOOL *for the* Deaf & Blind

*giving kids the building blocks to independence*

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## **Education Interim Budget Committee Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind Quarterly Update December 15, 2021**

### **MSDB Phone System**

The phone system is still in stage one of construction. This includes pulling all new wire to meet the demands of the phone system. The vendor spent two weeks pulling the wire to all the needed locations and now are currently installing the end connectors to the wires and then testing them. The vendor anticipates that this will be completed by December 17, 2021. Stage two will then consist of working with the state to have the IT Department come and install the routers and phones.

One hang-up with the phone system was allocating enough money for the project. When the legislature approved the project in HB 2, the appropriation was \$50,000. That number was based on material cost and estimated vendor costs at the beginning of the pandemic. However, the final cost to install the system will be \$97,625. We asked the Governor's Office to allow us to use some of the last biennium carryforward money from our excess personnel money. With that request approved, we will have this project done in the near future. We appreciate both the Legislature and Governor's Office for helping us see this project through.

### **Personnel Update**

As a result of not having the ability to fill all positions with our 2020-2021 school year, the only positive result was that the Governor's Office approved our request to carryforward funding to make sure the phone project was complete and that we could put money towards our lighting project, amount equaling \$146,878.

However, our students deserve and are entitled to an education where they can excel. This takes the entire team at MSDB to meet these needs. We would much rather hire staff for our students. In September, MSDB reported that ten positions had been filled from the previous year. Since that time, MSDB has hired four new staff members including; ASL Mentor, Orientation and Mobility Specialist, Cottage Custodian, and a part-time Interpreter. We still have our School Psychologist position open here at MSDB and have not received any applications in several months.

Currently, MSDB has 3 paraprofessional positions open. These positions were all offered to various individuals. One applicant lived in Great Falls and the other two applicants were from out-of-state, North Carolina and Nevada. All of them turned down the position due to the pay of the position which is currently at \$11.50. The out-of-state applicants also stated that they could not find reasonable housing. We have not received any applications for the LPN position and we suspect that the reason is pay, \$20.63.

During the next quarter update, MSDB would like to show how we have aligned our staff to better meet the needs of our students. We would also like to show how we could provide better services to students throughout the state.

### **Maintenance Costs**

MSDB has already seen an increase in unforeseen maintenance issues this year. We have needed to pay for the following from our general services budget:

Ice Machine (\$2,290) - The ice machine is used to help keep items cool on our buffet line that feeds the students and staff. It is critical to keep a variety of different items cool but accessible to those that eat on our campus.

Electrical Work in Gym (\$18,638) – We had a gopher chew up electrical wires in our Mustang Center. As a result, new wires needed to be installed, new breakers needed to be installed, and a new panel. We turned this into the insurance but was denied. The reason provided is that damage done by rodents is not covered by the insurance.

Water Line Leak (No Bill Yet) – We had a water line leak on campus. We had to pay for the excavation to see what the problem was. Which resulted in finding the leak between the city connection and our boiler room. Once we get the bill, we are hoping that insurance will help cover the cost.

Other maintenance issues that have come up, but we are trying to make it through the year:

Kitchen Freezer/Cooler Condenser (\$17,579) – Late this summer we had to throw out all the food in our cooler. The result was a leak in the gas line that runs our condenser in our kitchen. The gas line has been refilled three times since then to keep the freezer/cooler at a safe temperature. It is our hope to have the money at the end of the year to replace condenser and gas lines replaced.

### **Verizon Tower**

In 2020, Verizon put a tower on top of the Mustang Center, MSDB Gym. This was due to an agreement with previous MSDB administration and Verizon. MSDB understands that the building and property belong to the state and we deposited \$31,000 into the state general fund.

MSDB would ask for consideration to retain that money and help with maintenance projects similar to what is indicated above.