

GRESHAM-BARLOW SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 10 JT.
Minutes of Regular Board Work Session

Thursday, November 20, 2025

The Gresham-Barlow School District Board of Directors held a regular work session on Thursday, November 20, 2025 in the Library / Media Center of North Gresham Elementary School, 1001 SE 217th Ave, Gresham, OR. A Zoom link was provided for virtual meeting attendance.

Board Members present:

Heather Coleman-Cox, Shawn Farrens, Kris Howatt, David Ligatich, Blake Petersen, Brenna Puderbaugh.

Cabinet Members present:

Dr. Tracy Klinger, Superintendent
John Koch, Deputy Superintendent
Dr. Sara Deboy, Assistant Superintendent
Michael Sweeten, Executive Director of Human Resources
Athena Vadnais, Director of Communications and Community Engagement
Pete Bejarano, Director of Finance

Opening Items

1. Call to Order (6:00 p.m.)

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by the board chair, Blake Petersen.

2. Roll Call (6:01 p.m.)

Director Riegelmann was absent from the meeting. A quorum of the board was in attendance. Director Ligatich attended the meeting virtually. Budget Committee members in attendance for the budget update portion of the meeting included John Hartsock, Nick McWilliams, Garrett Wood, and Vaden Green who attended virtually.

3. Approve Meeting Agenda (6:01 p.m.)

MOTION 35: Move to approve the meeting agenda as presented. This motion, made by Shawn Farrens and seconded by Heather Coleman-Cox, Carried.

Aye: Heather Coleman-Cox, Shawn Farrens, Kris Howatt, David Ligatich, Blake Petersen, Brenna Puderbaugh

Absent: Holly Riegelmann

Aye: 6, No: 0, Absent: 1

Information Items

4. Long-Range Facilities Plan (6:02 p.m.)

District personnel Dr. Sara Deboy and Terry Taylor were in attendance to present the Long-Range Facilities Plan. They were joined by Meagan Baker-Wilmes and Marlene Gillis of Soderstrom Architects. Dr. Deboy shared that usually when districts complete this process it is to go out for a bond. The district is not going out for a bond at this time, but still needs to complete the process by statute. Mr. Taylor shared that this process was a bit different since they are not going out for a bond. They went in depth on some things they didn't have before, which really shared the equity across the district from the 2016 bond. There are some findings they will review with the board, and there was involvement with the state for the facility assessment.

Dr. Deboy noted that during the overview they will share information on the demographics and capacity in their current buildings, the structural and seismic shape buildings are in, and proposed cost estimates if they had money to fix everything. After sharing the general recommendations received from the state, there will be time for questions from

the board. They started preparations for this project last March and reached out to staff and students to see who wanted to join the committee. They held three meetings, two last spring and one this fall. They looked at hopes and aspirations, educational visioning, dreaming and thinking together, and then looked at the actual facility conditions. Committee members included district administrative leadership, school teachers and staff, students, parents and community members, and public partners. Dr. Deboy reviewed the demographics data noting declining enrollment over the last several years. Their projected enrollment for this year was almost exact which is helpful for budgeting. She reviewed capacity analysis which shows the current enrollment per school and the capacity within each building. As enrollment drops, they have more capacity in the buildings. Not every space within a building was intended to be a classroom.

Ms. Baker-Wilmes shared that they toured all the facilities in the fall of 2024. They combined information gathered from the tours with Mr. Taylor's depth of knowledge and the Veritas reports to come up with the Facility Assessment Report. Part of that report is the Facilities Condition Index which is the repair cost to bring each facility to like new condition, divided by the replacement cost of the facility. It gives a barometer of the general condition of the building. Anything over 30% is considered in the critical category, and that is when they might consider replacement as a more effective option than repair. This is only the physical condition of the building, it doesn't take into account if it has a music classroom, gym space, large enough library or cafeteria. Building grades are where they consider the condition of the building, accessibility issues, and hazardous materials that may be in the buildings. In general, the overall need ranking is the inverse of the facility condition index.

Board members noted that with the last bond there was a perception that the Gresham side got improvements with the last bond, and the next one would be the Barlow side. With no bond on the horizon the community was told one thing and there is no follow up. Mr. Taylor shared that in the recommendations for 2015 there was an amount limit where the board wanted to stay. The next step was another \$45 million to build a new middle school and that was turned down by that community because they didn't have a good place to put a new middle school. The board also asked about the differences between East Gresham and North Gresham and Mr. Taylor shared that East Gresham had a much longer list of ADA items than the report for North.

Ms. Baker-Wilmes shared that the Facilities Condition Index doesn't take structural things into account. Engineers put together an assessment of each building and they fall in low, moderate, high, and very high-risk categories. Each building is broken down into smaller pieces of each category. There were no schools in the very high-risk category. Several schools did have areas that fell into the high-risk category such as the gymnasium, classrooms, music room, or pool. There was discussion about the items from schools that fall in the high-risk category. Dr. Deboy added that the structural aspect is really more specific to seismic risk factors.

Mr. Taylor provided an overview of some of the other district facilities. During the last bond they made boundary changes and closed the Damascus and West Gresham campuses. West Gresham no longer fit as an elementary school and with the lower enrollment at Damascus they decided on a K-8 school instead. The district office hasn't changed since 1995 when the districts unified. They would like to get district staff in one building but there is not enough space. At one point they were also told they would need to vacate the space in the future. More discussion is needed around the district office. They had a study performed on West Gresham and it was determined it would cost \$20 million to renovate the building. Now West Gresham is used for the Adult Living Program, and office space for coaches and other staff. A big thing with the bond was to get people out of portables. The structured skills center and technology departments previously in portables are now in the Damascus building. Mr. Taylor reviewed the overall cost estimates for each school site noting that they gain cost savings through care of systems and lengthening their life so they don't have to be replaced as often. He also reviewed the costs per scope category and repair costs by site.

Mr. Taylor provided an overview of the committee recommendations. There was discussion in the committee on whether to repair or replace East Orient and West Orient, and they lean toward replacement. There was also a suggestion of a K-8, but that is not the charge of this committee. They decide on recommendations to repair or replace. The space for both schools would fit a K-8. They also discussed how to address the buildings that received a lighter touch

during the last bond including Kelly Creek, Powell Valley, and the middle schools.

After the presentation, there was time for board questions and discussion. Board members noted that a field trip to walk through some of the buildings with Mr. Taylor would be beneficial for the board. Mr. Taylor noted that they did take the committee to some of the old buildings, and also showed them the upgrades at the high schools and what middle schools might need. The board shared how grateful they are at the thought that went into the last bond to make sure buildings used things like one HVAC system so they aren't dealing with problems some other districts are facing. They delivered sustainable buildings to this community through the bond. Mr. Taylor noted they standardized a lot of things including HVAC systems, paint colors, locks and keys, and mechanical systems as much as possible. Board members asked about safety in the report, and Mr. Taylor shared that safety was a top thing they did with the bond by adding secure vestibules and key card entry to all schools. Prior to the renovation Gresham High had 76 outside doors, and they have narrowed that down to about four. There was discussion about propping doors and opening windows for ventilation and how that can still be an issue at schools without air conditioning. Mr. Gillis shared that between the seismic work and general work, Gresham-Barlow is way ahead of the neighboring districts. It comes down to the age of the building, and the bond work took care of a lot of the older buildings. Seismic activity is the main structural issue and utilizing the seismic grant program is an effective way to try and rectify those issues whenever possible.

Recess / Reconvene

Board Recess

The meeting was recessed at 7:09 p.m. and reconvened at 7:20 p.m.

5. Budget Update (7:20 p.m.)

Chair Petersen introduced the topic and thanked the budget committee members in attendance, noting they will be needed as they explore the challenges ahead. District staff is providing information to the board and budget committee so they know what kinds of decisions and assumptions will be coming, and when they can start validating them. Superintendent Klinger explained that they will share where they are at and what they will be facing. She introduced Director of Finance, Pete Bejarano, and Budget Analyst, Kevin Holden. She reviewed the goals for the presentation including what is on the horizon, some challenges for the budget season ahead, and gathering feedback in terms of guiding principles. Superintendent Klinger provided an overview of the 2025-26 budget noting they made significant reductions of just over \$8 million last year. The enrollment numbers used to build the budget last spring were very accurate so there isn't an additional gap there, and enrollment is trending down over the next 10 years.

Mr. Bejarano shared that the majority of funding for the district's general fund comes from the State School Fund (SSF), and the SSF formula is based off of enrollment. A steady decline means they see a steady decline in revenue related to SSF. The board asked how this affects the statewide budget if the whole state is in decline. Mr. Bejarano shared that overall, it does trend down, but it is not a one-to-one ratio, it is complex and the state formula has many layers. Next, he shared a graph contrasting the last 10 years of declining enrollment with FTE (full time equivalent). In the last 2 years these have been in alignment. A question people may ask is why there was such a large uptick in 2020-21. This had less to do with the pandemic and more to do with the SIA onboarding. The vast majority of district funds go to payroll, salary, and benefits. The next largest chunk of purchased services also includes payroll for transportation and food services, it is just that it is rolled into contracted services. He also highlighted the overall cost from PERS. Mr. Koch noted that with declining student enrollment you have declining staff, which means there is less money going into PERS.

Superintendent Klinger shared that after a couple months of payroll this fall, they are projected to be over budget by a million dollars in staffing costs. They were able to move people around in grants and avoided a RIF (reduction in force). They are working on savings in ATTW (additions to time worked) and sub costs. September is one of the most expensive ATTW months because of school startup. They have seen a decrease in staff absences which provides savings. For PERS they are projected over budget by \$3.6 million. Mr. Bejarano shared that there is significant complexity with PERS. It is a huge retirement account for the state and the rules are set by the Oregon Legislature. A massive majority of PERS revenue comes from its investment account managed by the Oregon Treasury. They attempt to centralize risk and beat

the market. He shared a graphic showing how much money comes from investments versus employers or employees paying into the system. He shared a graph showing the ups and downs of PERS rates of returns since 1997. The last time rates were set in 2014 they were seeing 14% returns. There are three things going on statewide affecting PERS costs. The state PERS is not making as much on investments as expected, there has been a massive unanticipated increase in overall wages from bargaining, and a steady state-wide declining enrollment meaning less employees are participating in PERS. As a state organization PERS has to raise rates. The summary of PERS employer contribution rates showed that rates jumped almost double the rate of inflation.

Superintendent Klinger stated that locally for Gresham-Barlow they have a \$4.7 million challenge from last year they have to resolve. HR1 means the state will receive about \$600 million less in revenue for this biennium. In October, all Oregon state departments were asked to make reductions, which includes the department of education. Oregon received \$15 billion in federal funds, but they are uncertain about funding next year. There is a lot of uncertainty with tariffs and inflation, and there are additional unfunded mandates coming. Senate Bill 3 (SB3) adds new graduation requirements for personal finance and career pathways. They are looking at ways to repurpose staff to achieve that. It is unclear what the new accountability bill will cost, but in the short term there are assessments and data reporting they have to do. If they wanted to reduce those assessment contracts, they wouldn't be able to because they would be required by the state. PBAM is looking at how to restructure the budget coding system to more closely identify what money has been spent and the results. This would include staff training.

Superintendent Klinger reviewed the overall impacts of what they are facing. The ending fund balance is projected at 6% and board policy requires 8%. There is a state shortfall due to HR1 and economic impacts. ODE has outlined a path that avoids midyear cuts, but that could be overridden by the legislature. She noted that their goal was to make cuts deep enough last year to get through the biennium without a second round of cuts. This changes that, and they will have to make more cuts and reductions this year. She provided an overview of tiers of reductions starting with things they know in this moment that could change. ODE was asked to create two different 2.5% reduction plans, and in recent conversations it looks like they are looking at the first 2.5% plan.

The Tier 1a column shows what ODE proposed last week. This would be the best-case scenario. Tier 1b shows a range for the state shortfall. Tier 2 and Tier 3 adds back in some things around ending fund balance which would take board action. Depending on what the board decides for the ending fund balance, the reduction would be between \$7-10 million. Mr. Koch added that there are other unknowns. As they talk about dismantling the Department of Education they will have to see if special education money comes. Unemployment is at 4.5%, and 5% is the benchmark for looking at interest rate cuts, but others are saying there was a jump in created jobs. There was additional discussion around special education costs and how they never get reimbursed for the full cost of services they have to provide.

Board members asked about retirement incentives to retire early like they drafted in 2008. Mr. Sweeten shared that it is different now. Before there was a cap for experience, but now they give them full. If they incentivize them to retire, someone who is very experienced could come in at the same rate, and then they would also be paying the early retirement. Superintendent Klinger shared that at this point everything is on the table, and they are going to make a list to start costing it out. They do feel like they are back in great recession times. At that point they got quite a bit of savings going from a block schedule to 7 period days, but they don't have that ability for savings this time around. They are starting early to understand the situation they face and start thinking about implications. They want to be mindful and intentional about how they move forward. At one point they were worried about a mid-year reduction. This month they have had communication with the associations and community groups. There will be a community letter going out. They anticipate meeting again in January with the standard budget process starting in March.

Superintendent Klinger reviewed the roles and responsibilities for the district staff, superintendent, and budget committee. The staff and superintendent focus on communications, process and goals, programmatic decisions, and spending of the allocations. The budget committee provides feedback and input into the process and goals. They also look at the function level budget allocations and advise the board. The Board's responsibility is to look at all that feedback, to make their one main decision on the ending fund balance. Mr. Bejarano shared that the making

appropriations chart is the only legal page the board approves for the budget. There are over 100 pages of budget documentation, but that is the only page that carries legal weight. Mr. Bejarano provided an overview of the function levels and restrictions. Functions include instruction, support, community service, facilities acquisition, transfers out, and contingency. District leadership has to translate that out to location level and area of instruction. It is important to remember that as a governing body, they are almost always talking about the general fund because they have control over that fund. There are other special revenue funds, but those are very restricted to specific expenditures by grants.

Superintendent Klinger shared that they are updating their process from last year, and reviewed the drafted guiding principles for financial goals and non-financial areas. There was discussion around the ending fund balance and how many days of operations it would allow them. There were comparisons to the great recession in 2008 with how low the ending fund balance was. Superintendent Klinger shared that there could be conversation with the board around the 8% ending fund balance. This is a newer limit and had previously been 5% which is very typical across district. She also noted that the state is in a different place in terms of rainy-day funds. The board noted that when they get to Budget 101 they may need to talk about contingency related to that ending fund balance. They may put more to contingency by reducing the ending fund balance. Board members noted that if the lower the ending fund balance, they should have some type of commitment to restore it to that amount. Chair Petersen added that it might be beneficial to have the Budget Committee help craft and review policy around the ending fund balance. One key distinction in 2008 was that enrollment was increasing, and here they are in a declining enrollment where families have more choices. They need to be conscience of the reason families are choosing public schools right now. Board members noted they want to look at what community employers and businesses need, noting they would not be in favor of cutting CTE trade programs. Superintendent Klinger clarified that there are specific funds through Measure 98 and Perkins to maintain those programs. There was additional discussion around how it got to this point, and advocacy opportunities for the board to get the big picture.

Superintendent Klinger shared that they met with union leadership yesterday because they have to be in this together. They can't be pitting themselves against each other. Board members noted that advocacy usually means asking for more revenue from the state, but they think it has to be something different. Superintendent Klinger shared there is broader understanding they need to build at the state level in terms of the Greshams of the world. Gresham is the second largest to Portland in the area, but doesn't get any funding from what Portland does. They truly are living on bare bones with no levy or big city adding to their funding. Superintendent Klinger reviewed the draft questions for budget prioritization noting they are using an equity-based decision-making tool. They have to be super supportive of any staff affected by a RIF. For programs that might be impacted, they want something there that is holding them accountable. They used similar questions last year when vetting items for reduction. Board members asked if they will have additional time to look at these prioritization questions. Superintendent Klinger noted that they will need them solidified fairly soon because they plan to start a list of items to consider for reduction after Thanksgiving.

Mr. Koch shared that there is some worry with going to the community to get input knowing that they still might not be able to do what the community wants. This is going to be a very difficult time heading into spring. Board members asked them to look at what programs are bringing belonging to kids and keeping them in school. They would like them to consider keeping those. There was a question about working back after retiring from PERS and if there is a cost to the district for hiring someone back. They also asked how many people in the district are working back. Mr. Bejarano didn't have the exact answer but said he will get those numbers. Budget committee members also asked at what point they would look at closing a physical building and moving teachers to another building based on occupancy numbers. Superintendent Klinger noted that will be something they have to consider, if not for next year, they may have to consider it in the next biennium.

There was discussion around communications and how to have conversations proactively so that people may know if their program is going away. They discussed ways to use a survey to gather feedback about people's priorities. They are trying to figure out how to help people understand the "why" for these things that are happening. If they are wanting to save something, what is the thing they are trading for? It helps illustrate what has to happen. They can do anything, but they can't do everything. Budget committee members asked if there is a timeframe for communication. Superintendent

Klinger noted that they have some contractual timelines, but they aren't sure yet. They have started backwards mapping and are really concerned about how they find this level of cuts. They will know more when they dig into savings. Last year was \$8.5 million in "easy" cuts, and the next level is going to be really painful. They have a letter ready to send out to staff and families tomorrow. There was conversation around developing a reduced budget and not knowing much until the middle of March. They also discussed the possibility of the State of Oregon decoupling itself from the federal which would make this a moot point. The board asked what the points are where they say they are adding things back. Superintendent Klinger noted that this is where having tiers of reduction help because they can look at adding back tiers.

Recess / Reconvene

Board Recess

The meeting was recessed at 8:53 p.m. and reconvened at 9:00 p.m.

Action Items

6. Policy Review: First Reading (9:00 p.m.)

Mr. Koch provided an overview of board policy revisions. Changes to Policy BBFC – Reporting of Suspected Abuse of a Child focused on cleanup language that matches what the district already does. Board members discussed possibly running through a scenario in the future to know how to appropriately respond as mandatory reporters.

Mr. Koch noted that they have had substantive conversations around Policy BHD – Board Member Stipends and Reimbursements, and the policy has significant adjustments including a title change and clarification language for how to vote on a board stipend. Board members shared background on this policy noting they have not been paid, but legislation was passed to allow board members to receive a stipend. There was concerns around conflicts of interest and stipends were put on hold. Voting to approve a stipend would not affect board members ability to be reimbursed for things like mileage or other costs incurred for board service. There was extensive conversation around whether to move this policy forward or not. Some board members expressed discouragement that as elected officials they are the only ones not paid. They noted that for some of them their time is not spent equally and there is a lot of board work that happens outside of just board meetings. Other board members noted that they don't want to create a policy that could allow for possible stipends when the district is talking about making cuts. Possible options discussed included leaving the current policy as is without accepting any revisions, approving the policy revisions without taking stipends, or approve the revisions and approve a stipend amount that they would get paid. The board would like to wait on this policy and asked for it to be brought back to the next work session for further discussion.

The suggested draft for Policy FF – Naming of New Facilities was not included in the agenda packet. The board will move this policy to a future work session for discussion.

The committee spent a good amount of time reviewing Policy IIA - Instructional Materials. Originally this policy was reviewed and approved in the spring, but OSBA never posted the approved policy to the website. Because of this, the committee was comparing their older approved policy with the newly revised policy. Their approved changes are still included in this policy, and it calls out appeals and opt out choices for parents. Superintendent Klinger noted that they will need to update the ARs that go along with this policy. The board will move this policy forward to the consent agenda for approval.

Policy JGA - Corporal Punishment cleans up language and delineates what a parent can do. It also talks about the ORS statutes that guide the district and how they train their staff. They will move this forward to the consent agenda in December for approval.

When the committee discussed Policy JOA - Directory Information, the conversation focused on why specific items of directory information were struck through on the revised version. They wanted to know why things like grade level were removed because they often shared that information for sports recognitions. Mr. Koch asked OSBA and they shared that these changes were related to immigration enforcement. Board members noted concerns about policy being changed

for a single point of time and that they would be in violation when celebrating students. They discussed leaving the grade level in the policy so that they could still celebrate and recognize students. Dr. Deboy noted that Policy JOB – Personally Identifiable Information shares rules around prior consent to release so if parents are comfortable, they can give permission. The board asked for this policy to go back to the Policy Review Committee to be discussed in relation to Policy JOB. It will then come back to the board at a future work session.

7. Acceptance of Board Member Resignation and Vacancy Announcement (9:31 p.m.)

Chair Petersen noted that Director Ligatich has been splitting his time the last few months between Arizona and Oregon. In order to take care of himself and his family he needs to resign from the board. Chair Petersen received a letter announcing Director Ligatich's resignation from Position 7 effective tonight, and the board must accept the resignation and declare the position vacant.

MOTION 36: Move to accept Director David Ligatich's letter of resignation from Position 7, At Large, of the Gresham-Barlow School District Board of Directors, effective November 20, 2025, and declare the position vacant. This motion, made by Shawn Farrens and seconded by Kris Howatt, Carried.

Aye: Heather Coleman-Cox, Shawn Farrens, Kris Howatt, Blake Petersen, Brenna Puderbaugh

Absent: Holly Riegelmann

Abstain: David Ligatich

Aye: 5, No: 0, Absent: 1, Abstain: 1

Following the motion, Director Ligatich noted that this decision did not come lightly, and this has been one of the biggest opportunities to give back to the community. He has enjoyed spending time with the board, staff, community, and children. He read his letter of resignation for the record. Board members expressed their gratitude for Director Ligatich's service noting that his enthusiasm for visiting schools was contagious, and he made them feel warm and welcomed. They recognized the spirit he brought to board work despite personal sacrifice, and noted his resilience and tenacity of channeling that into being a champion for everyone. They also appreciated the way he took their own children under his wing and invited him to do many things. He cared for each student in the district.

8. Budget Committee Appointments (9:41 p.m.)

Chair Petersen shared that they discussed the process for appointing budget committee members to the two open positions at their last meeting. Staff reached out to the previous committee members and one of them, Garrett Wood, is willing to continue to serve. They will follow the procedure laid out for the other position.

MOTION 37: Move to accept the recommendation to reappoint Garrett Wood, Position 7, on the Gresham-Barlow School District Budget Committee. This motion, made by Kris Howatt and seconded by Shawn Farrens, Carried.

Aye: Heather Coleman-Cox, Shawn Farrens, Kris Howatt, David Ligatich, Blake Petersen, Brenna Puderbaugh

Absent: Holly Riegelmann

Aye: 6, No: 0, Absent: 1

9. Personnel Report: Employee Contracts (added November 19, 2025) (9:43 p.m.)

Mr. Sweeten shared that they have a few people that need approval so that the district can pay them this month.

MOTION 38: Move to approve the recommended licensed new hires list for 2025-26 as presented. This motion, made by Brenna Puderbaugh and seconded by Heather Coleman-Cox, Carried.

Aye: Heather Coleman-Cox, Shawn Farrens, Kris Howatt, David Ligatich, Blake Petersen, Brenna Puderbaugh

Absent: Holly Riegelmann

Aye: 6, No: 0, Absent: 1

Discussion Items

10. Board Travel (9:44 p.m.)

Board members previously asked about attendance at national conferences and asked for cost estimates, specifically for the upcoming conference to the National School Boards Association (NSBA) Conference in San Antonio. Board members asked for clarification if this discussion was meant to determine if they should or should not go to the NSBA Conference this year. Chair Petersen confirmed that was part of the discussion, along with the value and merits of attending based on the budget discussion. Board members noted that based on the budget conversation, they would be in favor of not attending the conference during this fiscal cycle, which would include this year and next. It was noted that they have very good conferences available locally, including the upcoming School Law Conference in December. This is a good conference for board members to attend to learn more about topics such as laws around special education. There was discussion on whether they needed a motion to clarify they weren't going to attend the conference and would revisit the discussion for 2028. Chair Petersen noted they wouldn't need a motion for not attending, but it would be good practice to have a motion to approve a board member's attendance at a national conference in the future.

11. Future Board Agenda Topics (9:50 p.m.)

Chair Petersen reviewed the future board agenda items list. Superintendent Klinger noted that they reviewed the list of brainstormed topics from the August Strategic Planning Retreat. The topics listed in this agenda item needed additional clarification on what information they wanted presented. She asked them to submit the topic through the regular board request form and add more detail so they know what information to gather.

Closing Items

12. Announcements (9:51 p.m.)

Chair Petersen reviewed the announcements included in the board agenda packet. He shared that he is working on a formal invite to the Barlow Winter Alumni Concert December 17th for the board. A zoom link for virtual meeting attendance will be provided for upcoming meetings.

13. Adjournment (9:53 p.m.)

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:53 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
Sarah Avery
Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and
Board of Directors

Note: These minutes were approved by the board on _____:sa