

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION
OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SCHOOL DISTRICT 4J LANE COUNTY, EUGENE, OREGON**

October 7, 2020

The Board of Directors of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held an Executive Session at 5:30 p.m. and a regular session at 7 p.m. Notice of the meeting was mailed to the media and posted in the Education Center on October 2, 2020, and published in *The Register-Guard* on October 7, 2020.

NOTICE: In light of current public health concerns related to coronavirus COVID-19, the meeting of the Eugene School District Board of Directors took place virtually via Zoom meeting. Pursuant to ORS 192.670, the meeting was open to the public via live radio broadcast on KRVM 1280-AM and via the Internet at www.4j.lane.edu/

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mary Walston, Chair
Judy Newman, Vice Chair
Anne-Marie Levis
Alicia Hays
Gordon Lafer
Martina Shabram
Jim Torrey

STAFF:

Cydney Vandercar, Superintendent
Charis McGaughy, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction
Kerry Delf, Chief of Staff
Brooke Wagner, Director of K-8 Education
Andy Dey, Director of Secondary Education
Kat Lange, Director of Student Services
Kyle Tucker, Chief Operations Officer
Christine Nesbit, General Counsel
Steve Menachemson, Director of Technology Services
Jeffrey Johnson, Director of K-8 Education
Andrea Belz, Director of Financial Services
Holly Langan, Director of Administrative Services
Lisa Fjordbeck, Executive Assistant/Board Secretary
Karen Hardin, Director of Human Resources

MEDIA: KRVM

II. REGULAR BOARD MEETING

III. CALL TO ORDER. ROLL CALL, FLAG SALUTE, LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Chair Walston called the Regular Board meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and called the roll call. She led everyone participating in the meeting in the pledge of allegiance. She then acknowledged the land on which the meeting was taking place was the Traditional Homelands of the Kalapuya People, who

have been stewards of the land for approximately 14,000 years. Chair Walston also touched on Lane County being a major trading and gathering hub in the mid 19th century, and how the County went on to become the designated service area for the Confederated Tribes of: Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians, the Confederated Tribes of the Grande Ronde Indians, the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians, the Coquille Indian Tribe, and the Cow Creek band of Umpqua Indians, during the Restoration era from 1977 – 1989.

IV. AGENDA REVIEW

Chair Walston announced the Board would be pulling Item XI. 1, Approve Selection of Executive Search Firm.

V. INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS AND SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Vandercar offered those participating in the meeting a Superintendent's report. She had special thanks for the Employee Groups' (OSEA, EEA, and MAPS) leadership for drafting a joint message with her for School District 4J staff, regarding Black Lives Matter.

VI. COMMENTS BY BOARD CHAIR

Chair Walston reviewed the meeting's agenda, mentioning the following items:

- Considering revisions to the District's Religious Holiday policy
- Receiving a bond update on summer work
- The ability for School District 4J students to receive free Eugene Public Library cards—Chair Walston thanked the City of Eugene, the Eugene Public Library, and the Friends of the Eugene Public Library

VII. ITEMS RAISED BY THE COMMUNITY

The Board acknowledged that they had read all written and submitted comments from the community, and they thanked them for their communications.

VIII. COMMENTS BY EMPLOYEE GROUPS

Sabrina Gordon, President of Eugene Education Association (EEA), thanked Superintendent Vandercar for sending the clear message to District staff that Black Lives Matter in District schools, classrooms, and workplaces. She gave a nod to District students and their families for navigating the school year during the COVID-19 pandemic.

IX. CONSENT GROUP

MOTION: Ms. Newman moved, seconded by Mr. Torrey, to approve the Consent Group as presented.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously 7:0.

X. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

1. Update on School District 4J Return to Learning

Superintendent Vandercar et al. updated the Board on the District's plan for reopening schools.

School districts across Oregon have returned to learning for the 2020–21 school year. Eugene School District 4J's return-to-learning plan, which aims to support students' well-being and academic progress while protecting students and staff from the spread of COVID-19, has been established in alignment with state requirements issued by Gov. Kate Brown, Oregon Department of Education and Oregon Health Authority.

The start of the school year was delayed by one week due to impacts of the McKenzie Wildfire near Eugene–Springfield, which displaced some staff and students, caused exceptionally hazardous air quality for a prolonged period, and delayed the distribution of technology to thousands of the District’s students.

School began on Sept. 21, with all 4J students learning online in a “Comprehensive Distance Learning” instruction model, which will continue at least through winter break. If public health conditions allow, schools will resume in-person instruction in a hybrid of online and on-site learning in January or later.

While students are learning online, the District is working to open school campuses for limited in-person instruction and supports for individual students or small groups, as public health metrics permit. One of the restrictions on opening school campuses for limited in-person instruction is that there must have been no new cases of COVID-19 in the past 14 days among any of the school’s students or staff, regardless of whether they have been on campus. Limited in-person instruction includes services such as special education evaluation and internet hubs for students who can’t access online instruction at home.

Staff will provide an update on the district’s return to learning for the 2020–21 school year, including information on student enrollment and attendance, health and safety measures, technology and internet supports, community childcare partnerships, and food services and home delivery of school meals.

Mr. Torrey asked if there was a way for the District to educate parents of young District students on the online school software.

Mr. Lafer asked if there were ways that more trainings could be done for parents who have a similar set of platforms that they are dealing with. He also asked how many 4J families have kids who need free childcare. Dr. Wagner replied that the outreach has been done at the classroom level but not the District level.

Ms. Wagner replied there was a series of videos the District had shared with families to help them navigate the online learning software. She added that the District had shared those materials with over a thousand families.

Ms. Newman wondered how many students could go into each internet hub, and how many students could be accommodated by the District middle schools as far as childcare was concerned.

Ms. Wagner replied up to 20 kids could be in a space for childcare.

Ms. McGaughy added that, as far as the Internet hubs were concerned, it was 10 kids per cohort.

Ms. Shabram asked how the kids who were not able to participate in the internet hubs were being accommodated.

Ms. Smith-Johnson said she had provided names to school administrators of students who are awaiting access to the internet hubs.

Chair Walston asked if menu prices were underwritten by the USDA, or if there were other income sources.

Ms. Langan said the federal government had extended its waiver that allowed School District 4J to provide meals to all families at no cost to the families themselves. She said the District does get reimbursed by the federal government, via the state government.

Ms. Levis asked if other school districts had been coming up with ideas that School District 4J should be looking at and possibly adopting.

Ms. Langan said that she had not been seeing many innovations in this area; she posited that was because of all the regulations surrounding USDA meals.

2. Library Cards Free for 4J Students

Ms. Delf offered the Board a report on the free library cards for all School District 4J students.

Eugene Public Library cards are now available at no cost to all students in 4J and Bethel schools, including approximately 1,200 students who live outside the Eugene city limits and property tax base. The usual non-resident household fee will be waived for these students.

This change is made possible by a three-year pilot partnership of the Eugene Public Library, Eugene Public Library Foundation, Eugene School District 4J, and Bethel School District, with each partner bearing a share of the cost.

This partnership program is available to all students enrolled in 4J's neighborhood and alternative schools. It is not provided for private, parochial, charter or home school students. Library cards also are available to 4J classroom educators for educational purposes (not for personal or household use).

All enrolled 4J students have received a library card application and information in back-to-school mailings and communications from the school district.

Ms. Shabram asked if students using technology given them by the District for distance learning would be able to access Eugene Library's digital resources on that technology.

Ms. Delf said she was not able to definitively answer that question in detail at this time, but the students should have access to Eugene Library online resources.

3. Receive Bond Update on Summer Work

Mr. Tucker and Mr. Spain offered the Board a bond update and Power Point presentation on summer work.

Local voters approved a bond measure in November 2018 to replace aging school buildings and fund other capital improvements at every 4J school.

Three aging school buildings will be replaced with high-quality facilities built for school safety, modern seismic standards, sustainability, and 21st century education: North Eugene High School, Edison Elementary School and Camas Ridge Elementary School. Planning for the new school buildings and other capital improvements is progressing.

Staff will present an update on bond-related work over the Summer 2020.

Ms. Levis asked if there were any construction price flexibility and/or elasticity due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Spain replied there were changes in the construction market, and they were getting great bidding participation. He said this was also true as far as architectural work.

Ms. Newman asked if the School District 4J construction supply chain had been affected by COVID.

Mr. Tucker answered no, not so far.

XI. ITEMS FOR ACTION

1. Approve Revisions to Board Policies

Superintendent Vandercar, and Ms. Nesbit offered the Board a report on revisions to School District 4J policies JEF – Release Time for Religious Instruction, and JED – Student Absences and Excuses.

In February 2020, the board received information about how the district accommodates students' individual right to observe religious holidays and about how board policies may be strengthened. Towards that end, the Superintendent is recommending revisions to policy JEF – Release Time for Religious Instruction

Staff recommend a revision in policy JED – Student Absences and Excuses to ensure clarity about absences due to religious observances. In addition, legislation in 2019 expanded some of the reasons for excused student absences, necessitating other policy revisions to policy JED.

MOTION: Ms. Newman moved, seconded by Ms. Levis, to approve the revisions to policy JED – Student Absences and Excuses as presented.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously 7:0.

MOTION: Ms. Newman moved, seconded by Ms. Levis, to approve the revisions to policy JEF – Release Time for Religious Instruction as presented.

Mr. Lafer offered he and Ms. Newman were introducing amendments to the revision that included differentiation between school-level events that affect many, to smaller events that may only affect a class, or one person, and whether or not missed assignments, activities, etc., could be made up or not. He added that, in their proposal, if something could not be made up, it would have to be signed off on by an administrator, not just a single teacher.

MOTION: Mr. Lafer moved, seconded by Ms. Newman, that the proposed revisions to policy JEF – Release Time for Religious Instruction, be amended to reflect the changes suggested by he and Ms. Newman as mentioned above, and also to leave the term 'reasonably' in the original proposed changes document.

Ms. Hays said she was not comfortable moving forward without personally getting a legal opinion about the proposed revisions and amendments to that proposal.

Ms. Levis agreed with Ms. Hays; she offered the Board had not taken enough time with the materials and legal opinions at hand.

Mr. Lafer withdrew his prior motion to amend the proposed revisions.

MOTION: Ms. Newman moved, seconded by Ms. Shabram, to table the vote on policy JEF – Release Time for Religious Instruction until the next Board meeting on October 21, 2020.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously 7:0.

XII. ITEMS FOR ACTION AT A FUTURE MEETING

1. Consider Approval of Board Working Agreements

Chair Walston gave the Board an overview of the annual approval of the Board working agreements. She urged Board members to share via email any suggestions/amendments with the full Board, and they could be discussed at the next Board meeting.

2. Review Board Goals

Chair Walston addressed the Board concerning its goals for the 2020-21 school year. These goals are:

- Navigating COVID
- Recruitment of a permanent Superintendent
- Adoption of a district wide safety plan
- Plans for the North Eugene region

Chair Walston suggested that, since on October 14, 2020, the Board was scheduled to meet to discuss the role of the Board, they schedule a full discussion and possible adoption of Board goals during the regular Board meeting on November 4, 2020. The Board concurred.

XIII. COMMENTS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS BY INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS

Mr. Lafer thanked EEA for creating the upcoming listening sessions with teachers, which he offered would be very helpful. He also appreciated Superintendent Vandercar and the unions for their joint message of Black Lives Matter.

Mr. Torrey appreciated the sheer volume of emails the Board had been receiving from the School District 4J community. He added that very few of said emails were overly critical of District staff.

Ms. Newman shared a story from a parent of a District student (with permission from the parent) who was having difficulties with distance learning—difficulties exacerbated by the student's disability. The letter lauded the teacher in this situation, who, along with teaching aides, was able to walk the student through the course material in a way that was very helpful for both the student, and the parent.

Ms. Shabram listed two events that took place the week prior that she was not able to attend because of her work, but that she wanted to mention: a KLCC forum about racism in schools, and a town hall for Eugene parents.

Ms. Hays thanked Superintendent Vandercar for her promulgation of the importance of wearing masks during the COVID pandemic. She lightheartedly suggested penalties for students not wearing masks, or wearing them incorrectly, similar to penalties in sports.

Ms. Levis praised the joint statement from Superintendent Vandercar and the unions that Black Lives Matter.

Chair Walston said she enjoyed the virtual back to school event held recently. She pointed out the Board had received many emails from the community asking the difference between equity and equality, and she stated there was an Equity Committee meeting tomorrow (October 8, 2020) that she planned on attending. Ms. Levis said she had recently attended a Eugene Education Foundation (EEF) meeting, at which the District's equity work was discussed.

Chair Walston also mentioned the KLCC forum on racism in schools; she believed it was a great forum, and a great start to an ongoing discussion which needed to happen continuously around the subject of racism in schools.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Walston adjourned the meeting at 10:04 p.m.

(Recorded by Rodney Cimburke)

Cydney Vandercar
District Clerk

Mary Walston
Board Chair