

**MINUTES OF THE RETREAT
OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SCHOOL DISTRICT 4J, LANE COUNTY, OREGON**

August 28, 2021

The Board of Directors of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a board retreat from 12:00–6:00 p.m. and an executive session at 6:00 p.m. at the Education Center, 200 North Monroe Street, Eugene, Oregon. Notice of the meeting was mailed to the media and posted in the Education Center on August 20, 2021 and published in *The Register-Guard* on August 24, 2021.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS:

Judy Newman, Chair
Martina Shabram, Vice Chair
Alicia Hays
Gordon Lafer
Alicia Hays
Laural O'Rourke
Maya Rabasa
Mary Walston (via zoom)

STAFF:

Cydney Vandercar, Interim Superintendent
Kerry Delf, Chief of Staff
Christine Nesbit, General Counsel
Lisa Fjordbeck, Executive Assistant / Board Secretary

MEDIA: none

OTHER: Sabrina Gordon, EEA President, Imelda Cortez, EEA Vice President

Welcome & Introductions

Margot Helphand welcomed board members back for the second day of board retreat.

Ms. Helphand reminded the board that at the retreat on August 25 she had asked that each board member think about “what you bring to the board.” “What is your gift?”

Ms. Walston said she brings 30-years’ experience working in public entities, and serving on various community boards and committees. Ms. Walston said she volunteers in our schools and knows the work that staff do for our students.

Ms. O'Rourke said that often people like her are left out. However, she brings ideas and will share why they are important.

Ms. Rabasa said she brings knowledge and experience from volunteering in schools and being involved in the community.

Ms. Shabram said as a young person she empowers youth to participate in public service.

Ms. Newman said her experience of over 30 years working in early childhood education and special education brings perspective to the work of the board.

Superintendent Vandercar said she listens to the board and understands there are things they want to see happen, and if she can, she will make it happen.

Ms. Hays said she brings years working on positive and authentic youth engagement. She has a strong background in community engagement and activism. Ms. Hays said that in addition, she brings 20 years working with an elected boards, 30 years of equity work. 40 years advocating for human rights.

Ms. Helphand walked the board through goal setting. She asked the board to consider what they absolutely have to do legally, consider their fiduciary responsibilities and other annual duties that they had to work into their meeting schedule. Ms. Helphand asked the board to consider "What do you absolutely have to do get done and then consider what you want to set as goals. Ms. Helphand said that setting too many goals may get overwhelming. She encouraged the board to consider setting goals that were realistic for them to work on this school year. Ms. Helphand said the board could set additional goals next year. She also acknowledged that the board could do a mid-year check in and get a pulse for where they are with their scheduled work.

The board identified their list of "have to do items" which included: Conduct a search process for the permanent superintendent, Conduct the annual evaluation of the interim superintendent, Budget Committee membership selection and budget process; the All Students Belong plan.

Mr. Lafer wanted to clarify the level of challenge and time commitment needed for these tasks. For example the superintendent search process will take lots of time while the budget committee and budget process would not require the same time commitment.

Ms. Shabram wanted to qualify the time commitment. She said all board goals take an amount of time and not every person has the same 24 hours in a day.

Ms. Helphand encouraged the board to consider what's doable and what criteria could be used to identify priorities.

Ms. Rabasa said that creating and using an equity lens is critical.

Mr. Lafer said he was interested in goals that move things for kids.

Ms. Newman would like to review things that we've told the community we would work on.

Ms. O'Rourke said she had a full list of things that she wants to see done. She does not feel beholden to the list of things that were needing to be done on past lists. She wants to move on to the things that the community has elected her to get done.

Margot went through the list of suggested board goals.

Ms. O'Rourke said she wanted to see a communications policy. She hears from community members and 4J parents that they are not getting the information that they need.

Mr. Lafer said he would like to see a teacher climate survey. He has proposed that the district partner with EEA to create a survey to find out how teachers are feeling. He would also like to see the Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) initiated last year be a goal.

Ms. O'Rourke asked if the teacher survey could be attached to the communications plan.

Ms. Rabasa said that the equity lens needs to be used and she wants to ensure that the district and the board make that a priority.

Ms. Hays wanted to make sure that the board ask – is this board work or superintendent work. Ms. Hays also said she had some significant concerns about creating a Community Benefits Agreement without a deep look into the equity impact. She has deep concerns about just having an agreement without really vetting the companies and asking for proof of their equity work in hiring and promoting women, people of color, etc. Ms. Hays would want the board to be very clear on the concerns she would raise if this were to move forward.

Ms. Helphand asked the board to consider goal setting for this year and remove some things – not forever, just for this year in an effort to stay realistic in what they could actually get done this year.

The board landed on the following goals.

1. Conduct a search process that results in hiring a permanent superintendent.
2. Complete an evaluation of the interim superintendent's performance.
3. Perform their fiduciary responsibilities by participating in the budget committee process.
4. Establish the next steps for *All Students Belong Initiative* including workplan.
5. Plan for the North Eugene Region that includes where YG and Kelly schools will be located.
6. Decide on an equity lens for the district and use it for all decision making.
7. Identify and implement climate change initiatives
8. Improve communication and transparency with stakeholders and the community.

The board agreed to do a mid-year check in on goals to see where they are and if something could be added to the list for this year. For example, Testing/Assessments. The board has had this as a goal before and the pandemic placed it on the back burner. Doing a mid-year check in to see if this goal could be moved forward.

The board retreat meeting time was extended to review working agreements.

Agenda setting was discussed and the length of time for board meetings was considered. How to add an emergency items to a board meeting agenda. Public meeting requires public notice. A board can offer the addition of an agenda item; however, it defeats transparency if the community hasn't been notified in advance of the topic.

Board Retreat Take Away:

Chair Newman encouraged board members to let her know which areas on the working agreements people would like to discuss.

Superintendent Vandercar invited board members to contact her for any questions so we can have a conversation that would be helpful to you.

Ms. Hays said she appreciate the time the board spent together in the retreat. She is concerned about the length of the board meetings.

Ms. Walston thanked the board for the time spent together. She said trust needs to be developed.

Ms. O'Rourke said she did not feel not frustrated going forward. She said she wants there to be a willingness to hear other opinions. She also wants everyone to know that we are all doing our very best.

Mr. Lafer said he appreciated Ms. Helphand and board leadership for putting together the retreat.

Ms. Rabasa said that she did not feel frustrated, but she is still nervous. She is a rule follower and is nervous that following working agreements is something that people may find it difficult.

Ms. Shabram said that she too feels nervous and that she is a deeply anxious rule follower.

Chair Newman thanked Ms. Helphand and she thanked the board for their participation in the two day retreat.

Chair Newman adjourned the board retreat at 1:00 p.m.

Cydney Vandercar
District Clerk

Judy Newman
Board Chair