

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

Date: October 6, 2021

The Board of Directors of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a work session at 5:30 p.m. and a regular meeting at 7 p.m. at the Education Center, 200 North Monroe Street in Eugene, Oregon. Notice of the meeting was mailed to the media and posted in the Education Center on October 1, 2021 and published in *The Register-Guard* on October 6, 2021.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS:

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

STAFF:

Cydney Vandercar, Superintendent
Lisa Fjordbeck, Executive Assistant / Board Secretary

MEDIA: KRVM, KVAL

EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATIONS:

Sabrina Gordon, EEA
Peter Tromba, MAPS
Sheila Waggoner, OSEA

I. WORK SESSION

Discuss Budget Committee Application Review and Selection Process

Chair Newman opened the meeting at 5:35 p.m. and noted that Mr. Lafer was absent. The purpose of the work session was to discuss the Budget Committee application review and selection process. There were three open seats: two for three-year positions, and one for a one-year position. Chair Newman mentioned that there was a new requirement from the State to have a member of the Budget Committee also serve on the Equity Committee. Since he was already on both committees, Gary Campbell would serve that role.

The application process had already begun, and the deadline was October 13 at 5 p.m. In order to be considered for a position on the Budget Committee, applicants needed to be a registered voter who lived in the 4J district. In addition, the applicant could not be a 4J employee.

Chair Newman asked for discussion regarding the process to be followed upon receiving applications from eligible candidates. She summarized options that had been considered during a prior work session: for all Board members to read all the applications and be present for interviews; for the Board to form a subcommittee to screen the candidates and perform an initial

interview and bring forward a group for consideration; or to ask candidates to answer two to three additional follow-up questions, which would be reviewed either by the entire board or by a subcommittee. Ms. Walston responded, to which Ms. Shabram agreed, that she considered it the responsibility of the full Board to interview all the candidates. There was discussion about the amount of time it would take if there were an extraordinary number of candidates.

Chair Newman referred to the work session materials and asked what the priorities would be when considering candidates. Ms. Shabram shared her concern that the legislative requirement that an applicant for the committee be a citizen, would hinder the district's desire to have more diversity on the committee. Ms. Walston reiterated that the role of community members was to bring the community voice to the Budget Committee, so knowledge of the community and the ability to work together in a group was important to her. Ms. O'Rourke expressed that she would want to use the Equity tool when considering a process. Ms. Shabram offered that zip codes or high school catchments could be used to ensure that all regions of the district were represented. She said that serving on the committee would be a good entry point for someone interested in government. There was a discussion about the idea of using zip codes as part of the scoring tool, considering that many families lived in one region and had students who attended school in another. Other metrics that might be useful were whether one owned or rented their home. Other cities had implemented similar metrics to ensure their boards were diversified. Ms. Hays suggested that all the ideas discussed might not end up as metrics used by the Board as a whole, but rather by each member as they decided whom they wanted to elect.

After a robust discussion, it was agreed that the Board would forward to Leadership one or two supplemental questions to ask of eligible applicants. The Board would agree on the questions on October 13. Applicants could respond in a variety of ways. Applicants would also have the opportunity to present before the Board at a future meeting.

Chair Newman closed the work session at 6:30 p.m.

II. REGULAR MEETING – CALL TO ORDER

Chair Newman called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

III. ROLL CALL, FLAG SALUTE, LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Chair Newman noted that all board members were present either via zoom or in-person. After reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, Chair Newman read the Land Acknowledgement.

IV. AGENDA REVIEW

There were no changes to the agenda.

V. INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS AND SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Vandercar began her report with an overview of the staffing shortage, stating that school districts across the state and the nation are on a precipice due to an extreme staffing shortage of transportation, custodians and food service workers, educational assistants, educators and district level staff. She said that The COVID-19 response brings so much extra work on top of the "back to school" responsibilities that in a normal year are already a challenge to complete.

Superintendent Vandercar said that the COVID response means that every new change, update or requirement must be processed, decided and communicated to the whole district. All of which take time and often a lot of emotion. The guidance from ODE, OHA and Governor Brown's office is often modified due to new learning or a mutation in the virus. The stress each shift makes for the people within the system has been a lot to manage.

Superintendent Vandercar expressed her appreciation for staff who continue to be dedicated to supporting students and families. 4J is treating our COVID response with utmost respect and it is taking time and energy.

She requested that no other tasks be added to district or school staff until we manage the current COVID response. This includes extra requests from board members to provide reports, information, data about programs/work groups and more. She also said that she has directed district leadership and other support staff to not attend board meetings for a bit for a number of reasons. Superintendent Vandercar explained that there is a power differential between the board and staff, and when staff aren't treated with courtesy and respect as the expert professionals they are, it puts them in a poor position. She said the board's words have a deep effect on our work. She said that if she doesn't have an immediate answer to a board members questions during the meeting, she will respond once staff can research and provide the answer.

In an effort to reduce staff stress and workload and keep their focus on serving our students, she reported that most teacher evaluations would be suspended for the year except for licensed staff who are probationary, temporary and on plans of assistance, and all ongoing professional development and professional learning communities would be postponed until January 2022 at the earliest.

Superintendent Vandercar continued that she would be requesting a no-school workday on October 18. She said that this would provide critically needed planning time for teachers, catchup time for other staff and transition time to deal with staff departures, reassignments, leaves and other accommodations related to the vaccine mandate. This requires school board approval because it would be a change in the school calendar. She said the board would have this come back for action at their October 13 meeting.

She added that the district and Oregon School Employees Association had agreed to terms for additional transportation pay as well as bonuses for employees who continued in the district through March 2022. The Board would be voting on the Memorandum of Agreement at the next meeting.

She gave information about a job fair that would be occurring later in the week and reported regretfully that outside groups would not be able to use the buildings. She finished that in spite of the stress and rapidly changing environment due to the pandemic, students were attending school, learning, playing and laughing.

VI. COMMENTS BY BOARD CHAIR

Chair Newman expressed her sincerest appreciation for hard working staff who were all working at their capacity. She shared that her granddaughter was enthusiastic about school and it warmed her heart. She also acknowledged the work of the central administrative staff, their

resilience and fortitude even though they were often criticized. She said that when she picks up her grandkids from school she sees first hand their happiness to be back in school each day. She added that the decision to excuse staff from Board meetings was discussed in board leadership and we agreed to excuse staff and the reason was out of respect for their time and also for their protection in their efforts. She added that staff will continue to do their behind the scenes work and provide the board with information and materials on agenda items for board meetings. As superintendent mentioned if the board has questions that she can't answer during the meeting, the staff will provide the answer in follow up communications or at the next board meeting.

Chair Newman continued that the Board had attended two trainings the week prior: one on public meetings, and one on Robert's Rules of Order. As a result, the Board agreed that they would try to adhere to time constraints, only speak again after others had a turn, state their names before they spoke so that the listening audience knew who was speaking, and would be mindful to be clear and concise in their comments and questions.

VII. ITEMS RAISED BY THE AUDIENCE

Chair Newman read the requirements for making public comment. There were four speakers.

Janet Ayres understood that there was opportunity to make comment on the terms of the memorandum of understanding. She asked that the vote be delayed because there might be some concerns about the totals of ballots cast. She continued that 4J underpaid transportation workers and custodians. She asked that the district make mask requirements less stringent.

Harry Sanger expressed his discontent over the requirement to have all staff vaccinated and his disagreement on the seriousness of COVID-19 and needs to quarantine and isolate students, and being called a racist for criticizing the BLM movement. He was still expecting a response to his formal complaint lodged two weeks prior.

Ericka Thessen voiced her support for historically accurate culturally sensitive curriculum that taught diversity and equity. She reported that her student attended high school classes that helped form a solid foundation for being an adult. The whole family engaged in respectful and enthusiastic dialog about the course material. She believed that students had the skills to learn challenging topics and that honest debate was the basis of patriotism.

Joy Marshall represented Stand for Children. She thanked the staff for their hard work during challenging times. She urged the listening audience to attend the job fair occurring the next day. She was thrilled that the webinar on the new language arts curriculum was led by teachers who demonstrated that rigor was not opposed to creativity. She urged the district to commit to a curriculum that represented all children from diverse backgrounds.

VIII. COMMENTS BY EMPLOYEE GROUPS

Sabrina Gordon, representative for Eugene Education Association, reported on the severe staff shortages in schools. She continued that school systems across the nation were struggling. All staff were being called on to expand their roles to fill the need. She was thankful that the Superintendent and Board members were listening and responding to the needs of the 4J community.

Peter Tromba, representative for MAPS, shared his support for the October 18 school calendar change that would be an item for future action at the board meeting that night. He also urged the Board and senior staff to continue to work on forming effective working relationships built strength to strength. He concluded that agreement and alignment of all values were not necessary to work together. He believed that trusting and learning together were crucial.

Sheila Waggoner, President of the Oregon School Employees Association, spoke in support of the upcoming memorandum of understanding regarding transportation and custodial staff, and asked that other OSEA members such as food service workers be considered for additional support. She was also in support of the October 18 school calendar change.

IX. COMMENTS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS BY INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS

Gordon Lafer applauded the district and superintendent for the suspension of evaluations and professional development to relieve staff of some of their burdens. He appreciated the collaboration between the district and labor organizations on the upcoming memoranda of understanding. He asked whether it would be possible to offer leave to those who were choosing not to get vaccinated instead of laying them off. He reported that parents were concerned about the amount of homework being given.

Laural O'Rourke applauded the Superintendent for her decision to excuse staff of their duty to attend Board meetings and hopes she continues to do so. She said she often sees a roomful of people that haven't spoken at all and often wondered why we made staff be at meetings especially so late. It seems an unnecessary ask of our administrators. She wondered why the Superintendent formally refused the allowances and had declined to recommend approving instructional time allowances at a prior Board meeting in light of the upcoming request to have a no-school day on October 18. She said it's frustrating when these kinds of machinations happen when we could work together really well and get things done and not have to play any games.

Alicia Hays thanked Dr. Brainard and the representatives from OSBA for the excellent work session the prior week. She felt the training on public meeting law, public records and Roberts Rules of Order to be very helpful. She agreed that the Superintendent made a good choice to allow district staff to not attend board meetings in person. She pointed out that the Superintendent also made the decision not just because staff are tired, but because the professionalism of the staff had been repeatedly challenged by the Board. She said that as a board we need to look and that and we need to hold each other accountable. She said she knows how that feels and it's not helpful and it does not lead to a functional board and as a board we need to look at that and have some conversations around that.

Mary Walston agreed that the work session the prior week had been very helpful and she wanted to have additional training. She also agreed that the Superintendent made the right decision out of respect for her senior staff. She said it's hard to come to a meeting and have your integrity, professionalism, your credentials, years of experience, background, expertise and knowledge questioned and challenged by people who may not understand everything. She said that respect was a two-way street and the Board needed to work on it. She applauds the superintendent for that decision. She said she attended the EEF meeting and learned about grants, such as one for Kids in Transition to School and heard a presentation from Julia Johnson, 4J staff member who worked with young families. She had a drop-in meeting with members of Stand for Children and reported on the total accessibility park that was being built.

She also attended a presentation by the Eugene Public Library. She also attended a meeting of the North Region Planning Team meeting along with Gordon and they discussed Kelly and YG along with some other programs in the North Region. She was happy to announce that she would be volunteering in a PTO group.

Martina Shabram also applauded what the district was doing to ease the burden for all staff. She highlighted that issues with the Federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness were being rectified so that many more students would be able to have their student loans forgiven. She encouraged people to see whether they were eligible to receive assistant.

Maya Rabasa echoed the appreciation for creative solutions to relieve some of the tremendous burden for staff. She was excited to affirm student and staff identities through a resolution by the Oregon Department of Education. She challenged that the work not stop after adopting the resolution, but to create action items to keep the work going. Because board process takes a long time, she would propose as a board the commitment is made to immediately commit to using the Equity tool that had been in existence in 4J for a long time. She said that this does not mean that this the tool that the district and board sticks with per se but that we cannot delay implementation of such a tool because the process may take some time. She said she would be asking that an agenda item be added at a future meeting where the board can take action to implement the use of the 4J equity tool, immediately and consistently, even if just temporarily.

X. CONSENT GROUP - ITEMS FOR ACTION

1. Approve Request for State Revenue from Lane ESD
Presenter: Andrea Belz, Director of Financial Services
2. Approve Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Eugene Education Association (EEA) Concerning Implementation of Vaccine Mandate and Other COVID-Related Issues
Presenter: Christine Nesbit, General Counsel
3. Approve Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Oregon School Employee Association (OSEA) Concerning Implementation of Vaccine Mandate and Paid Leave
Presenter: Christine Nesbit, General Counsel
4. Approve Memorandum of Agreement with OSEA Concerning Custodial Classification Pay Grades
Presenter: Christine Nesbit, General Counsel

Martina Shabram moved and Mary Walston seconded to approve the items in the Consent Group.

Ms. Hays wondered whether the Equity tool had been used on the above items for action on the consent agenda and if the board would consider adding this step in their approval process in the future. **The motion passed 7:0.**

XI. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

1. Receive Update on Bond Project: Camas Ridge Elementary School Design
Presenter: Cydney Vandercar, Interim Superintendent

Chair Newman referred to the report in the packet that had been prepared by Kyle Tucker, Chief Operations Officer and Ryan Spain, Director of Facilities. Superintendent Vandercar reviewed the bond information that allowed the district to build three new schools with one set of specifications. She shared that staff were more than halfway through the planning stage. Next steps would be to move students into the Willard School, and begin to build the new school on the Camas Ridge site in 2022 with a move-in date in fall of 2024.

There would be an open house on Monday, October 11 in the outdoor pavilion. This would be the fifth open meeting to receive comment. She shared the modifications that had occurred as a result of comments made during prior meetings. Superintendent Vandercar highlighted certain areas of use on the blueprints.

Ms. Hays offered that if the green space were to be fenced it would reduce accessibility for those with mobility issues. Ms. Shabram continued that it would be unfortunate that Camas Ridge Elementary School would not have a walking path and suggested it be included in specifications for all future builds. Superintendent Vandercar shared that because of a variety of factors, including supply chain and materials costs, the project was about \$8M over budget.

Mr. Lafer expressed concern that the classrooms could not accommodate all the needs of teachers and students and that the district was not transparent in their process to not allow changes to the inside of the building based on community feedback. He asked whether there were gender neutral bathrooms. Superintendent Vandercar said she would find out the information and report in a Friday memo.

Ms. Hays reiterated that the district had shared with the community that they would be following a certain specification for the interior of the building in order stay within budget.

XII. ITEMS FOR ACTION

1. Select Executive Search Firm Finalists for Interviews
Presenters: Board Subcommittee Members Alicia Hays, Gordon Lafer and Maya Rabasa

Ms. Rabasa shared that the subcommittee had not reached out to four search firms that had requested to be contacted and was recommending that the Board vote to extend the deadline. Ms. Hays moved to open the search for an additional week. Ms. Shabram seconded the motion. Ms. Rabasa clarified that the four search firms in question had not been contacted and the subcommittee did not know whether they would send a proposal, however they wanted to give them an opportunity. Ms. Walston asked whether reopening the request for proposals period would delay the rest of the search process. Ms. Hays responded that the subcommittee was committed to keeping the process on track.

Ms. Hays restated the motion to reopen the informal request for proposal for one more week.
The motion passed 7:0.

2. Approve Revisions to Board Policy IKF – Graduation Requirements
Presenter: Christine Nesbit, General Counsel

Superintendent Vandercar read the requested changes from the prior Board meeting into the minutes:

The district will issue a 4J honorary diploma certificate, at the request of a parent or guardian, for a deceased student who died while enrolled in 11th or 12th grade before completing graduation requirements.

To be eligible for an honorary diploma certificate, the student must have attended a district high school, completed the prior school year, and been enrolled in 11th or 12th grade at the time of their death.

The honorary diploma certificate will be issued on or after the graduation date of the class in which the student was enrolled at the time of death. Issuance of an honorary diploma certificate may be withheld at the superintendent's discretion.

Ms. Shabram moved that the Board approve revisions to Board Policy IKF–Graduation Requirements. Ms. Rabasa seconded the motion. Ms. Hays thanked the staff for making the requested additional revisions. **The motion passed 7:0.**

3. Approve Contracting with SeeChange for Next Steps in the “All Students Belong” Work Plan

Presenter: Judy Newman, Board Chair and Martina Shabram, Vice Chair

Chair Newman shared the next steps that would be part of the contracted work, if agreed. She said that Leadership was asking the Board to authorize them to work with SeeChange to develop a statement of work and a cost to bring to the Board at a future meeting. Ms. Shabram moved that the Board authorize Leadership to contract with SeeChange for next steps in the “All Students Belong” initiative as described. Ms. Rabasa seconded the motion. Mr. Lafer wanted to make sure that best practices used by other districts were part of the work and also wondered whether the contract would involve determining how the district would be using School Resource Officers. Chair Newman referred Mr. Lafer to the steps she had listed, one of which would be to determine best practices for the use of either SROs or other staff.

Ms. Rabasa asked whether the regional support team the district was using to respond to student issues had received culturally relevant training. Chair Newman said she would get information to Ms. Rabasa.

Ms. Shabram reiterated the motion. **The motion passed 7:0.**

XIII. ITEMS FOR ACTION AT A FUTURE MEETING

1. Consider School Calendar Revision

Presenter: Cydney Vandercar, Interim Superintendent

Superintendent Vandercar said that the Board was responsible for the district calendar, which was why the item for action at a future meeting was before them. No instructional time allowances would be needed, but a change in the calendar was being requested.

She continued that she was making the request to have October 18 be a no student contact day to give staff time to make adjustments to staffing plans. The district would not know the full impact of the Governor's mandate that all school staff be fully vaccinated until October 15.

Ms. Rabasa questioned whether the motion could be moved forward for action that evening. Chair Newman and Superintendent Vandercar responded that a meeting would be held the following week to vote on the issue and the time to move it to an item for action would have been during the agenda review.

The Board discussed their concerns in favor of and in opposition to voting that night, which included giving parents additional time to make plans, and that voting that night did not allow the community time to make public comment. After discussion, a motion was made by Ms. Rabasa and seconded by Ms. O'Rourke to vote to approve the school calendar revision. There was further discussion which included whether to vote was a violation of the Board's working agreement, after which a vote was taken. **The motion passed 6:1.** Ms. Shabram shared that while she was in full support of the need to change the calendar, she did not understand the legalities of the decision to move the item forward for action at that evening's meeting.

2. Consider Resolution Encouraging Solidarity and Support for Student Identities
Presenters: Judy Newman, Board Chair and Martina Shabram, Vice Chair

Chair Newman opened the discussion whether to consider a resolution in alignment with the Oregon Department of Education. This would include language supporting school districts to welcome and affirm student identity by modeling the use of inclusive language, encouraging the proactive creation of safe and affirming spaces, and engaging in honest and authentic dialogue with students on who they are and how best to serve their needs. The Board would decide the language as a body.

Ms. Rabasa said that it deserved the time commitment necessary and supported a subcommittee to work on it. She added that staff identity should be included in the resolution. Mr. Lafer supported the work. Ms. Walston asked if the resolution was time sensitive and was concerned whether it would add to staff work-load. Ms. Shabram said that the pressure was coming from the Oregon Department of Education to confirm a resolution. She felt the urgency because of the protection and affirmation that it would give students who are struggling to feel included. She added her concern that there were boards that were creating resolutions in opposition, and it was important to make a stand in support. Ms. O'Rourke added that she felt that the Board was already late in passing the resolution. In response to a question from Ms. Hays, Superintendent Vandercar suggested that the Board begin working on the resolution and staff would give input when their work-load had decreased. After comments by Ms. Walston and Mr. Lafer, Chair Newman summarized that the plan was for Leadership to begin crafting the resolution with input from interested Board members. If needed, outside legal counsel would be consulted.

2. Approve Board Working Agreements
Presenter: Judy Newman, Board Chair

Chair Newman summarized that the Board had begun work on the Working Agreements at the retreat in August. She referred to packet which included all the changes that had been suggested. She said that the work for the evening was to hopefully approve the Agenda

Planning section. Ms. Shabram gave a summary of how Leadership approached the compilation of the added suggestions.

The Board made revisions to the section on agenda planning. It was agreed that except for in exceptional circumstances noted in item 5, items to be considered for inclusion on a future agenda should be brought to a Board meeting for approval. After the Board made additional changes, it agreed that work was finished on the section.

XIV. SUGGESTIONS BY THE BOARD FOR CONSIDERATION OF ITEMS AT A FUTURE MEETING

It was agreed that the Board would continue work on the Working Agreements in public session at the meeting on October 13, 2021.

Ms. Rabasa asked that the Board move forward with committing to using the Equity Tool that was in place. There was consensus among the Board that Leadership would determine the timeline for bringing it to a future meeting.

XV. ADJOURN

Chair Newman adjourned the meeting at 9:47 p.m.

(Recorded by Eliza Drummond)

Cydney Vandercar
District Clerk

Judy Newman
Board Chair