

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

Date: January 4, 2022

The Board of Directors of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a special meeting at 5:30 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 Monday, January 3, 2022.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS:

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

STAFF:

Kerry Delf, Chief of Staff
Lisa Fjordbeck, Executive Assistant / Board Secretary

MEDIA: KRVM, The Register-Guard

I. SPECIAL MEETING

Discuss Plan for Superintendent Search

Presenter: Judy Newman, Board Chair

Chair Newman called the Special Board Meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. Six of the seven board members were present.

Chair Newman expressed her appreciation that the board was able to meet on such short notice to determine how to conduct public forums for the superintendent search especially in light of rapidly increasing rates of COVID-19 infections due to the Omicron variant. She had sent an email that afternoon with a list of all the forums and a link to guidance regarding extra-curricular activities.

Chair Newman presented three choices: keep the plan as is, with some in-person meetings and some virtual; change all meetings to virtual; or make adjustments to the schedule of in-person and virtual meetings.

Ms. Walston said that she had a conversation with parents who were considering cancelling a play, and wondered whether the board should be in line with their own decisions regarding the nature of the upcoming forums. She was also concerned about the Alma Advisory Group coming in-person from across the country.

Ms. O'Rourke referred to the list of meetings and wondered whether it was the same as what was in the Register-Guard. Ms. Delf said that she would confirm that all the information was correct. Ms. O'Rourke responded that she considered it hypocritical in a different way than Ms. Walston: if the board had agreed to continue in-person learning, why would they not also have forums in-person. She said that there were still opportunities to meet virtually in the plan. She said that it was possible to be careful and maintain guidelines while still providing an opportunity for people to meet.

Ms. Delf clarified in response to a question from Ms. Rabasa that since the meetings were not during the day when children were in the building, there would be no requirement that attendees be vaccinated. Ms. Rabasa asked whether such a requirement could be implemented and Ms. Delf responded she would have to do more research before answering.

Ms. O'Rourke added, and Chair Newman agreed, that she was concerned that some parts of the community might feel as if they were being excluded if a vaccination requirement were to be implemented. Chair Newman added that she did understand the concern.

Ms. Shabram added her concern about vaccination requirements to attend a public forum. She also expressed her concern that the district might create a super spreader event. She asked that the board discuss the options.

Ms. Hays said that she loved attending in person meetings, but said that it was challenging to attend a meeting virtually when others were in person. She requested meetings occur virtually as opposed to hybrid. She also was concerned about having the Alma Advisory Group travel.

Ms. Rabasa said that she understood the risk to the community of having in person school and did not want to add additional issues by holding the public forums in person. She wondered about holding the bias training in person. She acknowledged that the forums would be in two weeks and hoped that the issues might be reduced. She said that moving everything online would increase access for some groups and reduce it for others.

Chair Newman clarified that she wanted to have the training in person and also to have student meetings in person. She expected that the staff meetings would be mixed in person and online. She wondered out loud whether those who might be negatively impacted by having the meetings online be offered resources to allow them to attend. Ms. O'Rourke added that the district could reach out to community partners who would provide access to computers. She said there were many programs that could assist in offering accessibility. She also wondered about delaying some events until COVID rates were a little lower.

Chair Newman summarized that most board members were leaning towards having the meetings virtually. Ms. O'Rourke reiterated that the district was still offering in person school and considered the ethical dilemma that having only virtual meetings created.

Ms. Shabram also considered the ethical dilemma and added that she did not want to add to the risk: students were cohorted and vaccinations were required to reduce risk during the school day. That would not be the case with evening in person meetings.

Ms. Rabasa responded that students were not cohorted. She also wondered whether there would be a way to record who was attending the meeting in order to contact trace if necessary.

She also wondered about postponing the meetings. She gave more options and thoughts and also expressed her regret that the board had not taken the time to create an emergency COVID response plan.

Chair Newman agreed that it felt hypocritical to ask students to attend school in person, but referred to the guidance that said that extracurricular activities should be reduced or done virtually so that the risk was reduced during school time. She was concerned about postponing activities.

Ms. O'Rourke suggested that if attendance was low at the public forums because of concern for exposure that additional meetings be added after the infection rates had gone down. Ms. Walston expressed her concern with adding meetings. She also said that in an abundance of caution, meetings should be online, which would also add more opportunities.

Ms. Hays said that although she wanted everything online, she was making a motion to have all the meetings online and hoped that resources would be added to provide access to those who needed it. She agreed with Ms. O'Rourke that the attendance and survey numbers should be monitored to ensure that the community was responded. Ms. Hays added that she wanted to have the bias training as scheduled. She also wanted to provide for in person meetings when it was safer.

Ms. Hays clarified that her motion was to move all meetings to virtual with the option to go to in person if the infection numbers came down. Ms. Shabram seconded the motion. Ms. O'Rourke asked to include Ms. Hays' thoughts recorded above in the motion—be open to a second bias training in person if possible; requesting community partners to provide access to underserved families; monitoring the attendance to ensure that the community was participating virtually—and agreed that it could be a friendly amendment.

Ms. O'Rourke said that Alma Advisory Group could likely provide target percentages of participation. Ms. Rabasa clarified that additional meetings would be offered if the numbers were lower than anticipated. She also asked whether families could use district issued devices to attend the meetings. Ms. Delf clarified that the district would need to ensure that those devices would work for the purpose of attending the meetings and that additional information would be forthcoming.

The motion as put forward by Ms. Hays and seconded by Ms. Shabram, with the friendly amendment by Ms. O'Rourke passed 6:0.

XV. ADJOURN

Chair Newman adjourned the special meeting at 6:20 p.m.

Cydney Vandercar
District Clerk

Judy Newman
Board Chair

(Recorded by Eliza Drummond)