

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

Date: April 27, 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 Friday, April 22, 2022 and published in *The Register-Guard* on Monday, April 24, 2022.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS:

Judy Newman, Chair
Maya Rabasa, Vice Chair
Keerti Hasija Kauffman
Alicia Hays
Michelle Hsu
Gordon Lafer
Laural O'Rourke

STAFF:

Cydney Vandercar, Superintendent
Kerry Delf, Chief of Staff
Brooke Wagner, Assistant Superintendent for Administrative Services
Christine Nesbit, General Counsel
Kyle Tucker, Chief Operations Officer
Lisa Fjordbeck, Executive Assistant / Board Secretary

MEDIA:

KRVM

I. SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

Chair Newman called the special meeting to order at 5:34 p.m. The purpose of the meeting was to appoint two board members to fill open positions 5 and 7. The board would be choosing from among eight finalists.

Chair Newman said that she trusted that each board member had considered the qualifications and characteristics important to them and asked each board member to share with the public. Mr. Lafer interjected that he hoped the board would also have time to discuss candidates. Ms. Hays asked whether Mr. Lafer planned to discuss the merits of each candidate or the ones that he supported. Mr. Lafer wanted to hear what each board member thought of different candidates.

Chair Newman said that the anti-bias training they had received promoted the approach that she was suggesting. Ms. Hays offered to go first.

Ms. Hays said that she was looking for candidates who could help increase the diverse voice that already existed on the board, who were active in schools and had a strong connection, who

had young children, had a commitment to serve all students and all pathways to student success, and who supported staff. She would also be choosing someone whom she thought could build bridges and help the board connect with the many communities of which 4J was a part; a strong leader who recognized their role in the community and as a board member.

Ms. O'Rourke was looking for a candidate with an honest voice and passion, and who had either been in education or had been around educators. Ms. O'Rourke was uncomfortable with hiring another person who had been an executive director or an administrator. She wanted someone with curiosity who could look at things a different way. She remembered her favorite and least favorite teachers. She did not want to fit into a stereo type. She regretted that the community was not choosing the new board members because she did not think it was best for the board to be doing so.

Vice Chair Rabasa said that she had asked herself the same question the applicants had to answer: what were the most pressing concerns the board would face in the next two years? With regards to equity work, Ms. Rabasa was looking for a candidate who was compassionate and steadfast in their values; an understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion; collaborating and collecting community input; committed to equally accessible education. Ms. Rabasa also sought a candidate who had demonstrable success and experience working on a board, with a community and with students; and someone who could cultivate a relationship with district staff. She finished by saying that she sought a board member who was up-to-date with district challenges in order to give their input to hiring a new superintendent.

Mr. Lafer was interested in someone who had a proven track record working with diverse student populations, focusing resources on the schools that needed them most, had experience in a classroom, was committed to reducing testing and supporting creative teaching, and committed to reducing anxiety and self-harm by students. He was also looking for someone who had concrete ideas, was ready to make significant improvements with a limited budget, and could restore trust with teachers and parents.

Chair Newman was hoping to find someone who was an independent thinker, was curious, open, and communicated in a transparent way; who had a commitment to ensuring that all students were heard; someone who had fresh eyes and ideas and was a problem-solver; someone who could build bridges, make compromise and think critically. Chair Newman was also looking for someone who had lived or worked in an educational setting, had experience advocating for students who were underrepresented, and could build trust in the community. Chair Newman continued that she was seeking someone with a strong equity focus and experience at a systemic level, and with knowledge regarding policies and how to implement them at a systemic level. She sought someone who had respect for all staff in the district.

Ms. Rabasa asked to take thirty seconds as a group to do a short breathing exercise.

Ms. O'Rourke asked whether the board would have time to discuss how they would vote. Ms. Delf clarified that the normal procedure would be to use a ballot to vote for their choices. Multiple ballots might be necessary to reach a consensus on two finalists. There was a discussion about how many to vote for on the first round of voting and whether the board would comment on their choices for finalists before or after they did the first rounds of voting. It was decided that the board would vote one round for two candidates.

After the first round of voting, Ms. Hays voted for Mr. Sequeira and Ms. Kauffman; Mr. Lafer for Ms. Hsu and Mr. Di Liberto; Chair Newman for Mr. Sequeira and Ms. Kauffman; Ms. O'Rourke for Ms. Hsu and Mr. Di Liberto; and Ms. Rabasa for Ms. Hsu and Mr. Di Liberto.

There was a discussion whether the candidates who received zero votes would be dropped from the ballot. Ms. Hays suggested discussing whom each board member would be voted for. Ms. O'Rourke suggested returning to using Robert's Rules of Order to decide how to proceed. Mr. Lafer suggested to vote again for three, and remove those candidates who received zero votes. Chair Newman suggested listing each candidate and discussing whether they should remain on the ballot or not. Ms. Hays and Ms. Rabasa discussed the option of voting for three people instead of two as a compromise.

Ms. Rabasa moved to do a round of voting with all eight candidates, with three votes cast by each board member, after which candidates who received zero votes would be eliminated. Mr. Lafer seconded the motion. Ms. Delf asked for clarification of what would happen if someone received four votes. Ms. Rabasa added to her motion that if there were three candidates who received four votes, there would be a finalist round of voting to follow. If two candidates received four votes, those two would become the board members. If one candidate received four votes, that person would be a board member, and the board would vote for one more candidate. Mr. Lafer seconded the clarification. **The motion passed 5:0.**

After the second round of voting, Ms. Hays voted for Mr. Sequeira, Ms. Jonak, and Ms. Kauffman; Mr. Lafer for Ms. Hsu, Mr. Hiura and Mr. Di Liberto; Ms. Newman for Mr. Sequeira, Mr. Isaacson and Ms. Kauffman; Ms. O'Rourke for Mr. Ross, Ms. Hsu and Mr. Di Liberto; and Ms. Rabasa for Ms. Hsu, Mr. Hiura, and Mr. Di Liberto. No Candidate received zero votes.

After a brief recess, Mr. Lafer moved to vote for two persons and to remove those who received zero votes. Ms. Rabasa seconded the motion. Ms. O'Rourke said that while she wanted to narrow down the field, she was aware that compromise might be necessary.

After discussion, in which it became clear that the board could not agree, Ms. Rabasa called to table the motion in discussion. Ms. O'Rourke seconded the call to table, **which passed 5:0.**

There was discussion about how to narrow down the field after which the group returned to the previous motion by Mr. Lafer. Ms. O'Rourke called for the vote. **The motion did not pass 3:2 with Ms. Rabasa, Ms. O'Rourke and Mr. Lafer voting yes, and Ms. Hays and Chair Newman voting no.**

Ms. Rabasa moved that the board do one more round of voting to ballot for three candidates, and remove those who received zero or one vote. Mr. Lafer seconded the motion. Ms. O'Rourke asked for a friendly amendment to repeat the vote, and only remove those with zero votes. Ms. Hays seconded the amendment. Mr. Lafer suggested that the board agree to Ms. O'Rourke's suggestion, and then if there were no changes, to vote as Ms. Rabasa suggested. After a clarification by Ms. Nesbit, Ms. O'Rourke withdrew her amendment. Mr. Lafer then restated his amendment. **The amendment did not pass 3:2, with Ms. Rabasa, Mr. Lafer and Ms. O'Rourke voting yes, and Ms. Hays and Chair Newman voting no.** The board voted on Ms. Rabasa's motion to vote for three and remove those with zero or one vote. Chair Newman called for the vote, with the same result that the motion did not pass.

It was decided to have an open discussion. Ms. O'Rourke said that the board would not be effective until they had all seven board members seated. She encouraged the board to consider all options to fill the vacancies. She added that the board needed to have all seven members before they interviewed the finalists for the position of superintendent.

Ms. O'Rourke continued that she felt strongly that it was necessary to have an educator on the board to bring the voice of teachers to the table. She was promoting Mr. Di Liberto. She considered his willingness to be on the board and the support he received in his previous bid for a board seat to be a positive indication of his talents.

Mr. Lafer also supported Mr. Di Liberto as a board member, who had many supporters among the community. Mr. Lafer listed Mr. Di Liberto's history that made him a good candidate, include as the bargaining member of Eugene Education Association, which gave him insight into all the issues facing educators as well as honing his skills for creating consensus. Mr. Lafer read from letters he had received in support of Mr. Di Liberto. He wanted to hear from those who did not consider Mr. Di Liberto a good candidate for the board.

Ms. Hays said that she did not know any candidates, except Mr. Di Liberto. She had voted for Ms. Kauffman, who seemed that she would bring a sense of calm and harmony to the board. Ms. Kauffman also had students and was involved at the school level, and who had experience through her work which would be an asset to the board. Ms. Kauffman was also a first generation immigrant.

Chair Newman said that while she respected Mr. Di Liberto, and had been clear that she wanted a teacher's voice to give input to the board, her intent was to strengthen the relationship between the board and all teachers, instead of relying on just one voice to speak for all teachers. She added that the same was true for classified staff and administrators as well. She had cast her vote for Mr. Sequeira, who was an immigrant and grew up in poverty. He had spent many years supporting education in his community. He was someone who students could look up to and could be a bridge to his community.

Ms. Rabasa brought forward Ms. Hsu as her best candidate. Ms. Hsu had been supported by board members and the superintendent in her work on the Equity Committee and had participated in the crafting of the racial harassment policy. Ms. Rabasa was also impressed by Ms. Hsu's willingness to categorize the library for the Chinese Immersion Program upon its move to Kennedy Middle School. Ms. Hsu was also an immigrant and would represent a community that was not well known. Ms. Rabasa had also selected Mr. Di Liberto whose decorum and personability were soothing and welcoming. She was hungry for a calming presence on the board. Ms. Rabasa remembered that it had also taken her many attempts to become a board member during a time when candidates who had access to teacher voice were being rejected. She said that Mr. Di Liberto was the teacher's choice for a board member.

Ms. O'Rourke said that she was concerned about the conflict of interest that appointing Mr. Sequeira to the board would create since he had worked for LaneESD. She appreciated Ms. Kauffman's passion, and did not know Ms. Hsu very well.

Mr. Lafer said that he agreed with the comments that had been made about Ms. Kauffman, Mr. Sequeira and Ms. Hsu as immigrants who could forge connections to their communities. He reasoned that in the same manner, Mr. Di Liberto could do the same for educators. He said that

EEA was not a political organization, but a representative one, and to have Mr. Di Liberto as a board member would create a partnership.

Ms. Rabasa said that while there was not a quorum of the board because there were only five board members, there was a majority, which was significant. She hoped to find a way to communicate that the board could come to a place of agreement, not because of personal interests, but because of what was better for students.

After a brief break, Chair Newman asked whether there was further discussion, or whether voting should resume. Ms. O'Rourke said that it was important to get the voting finished that evening.

Chair Newman said that in a small community such as Eugene, there was always the risk of conflict of interest and she hoped any board member would consider it if the issue arose for them.

Mr. Lafer moved to vote for three persons. Any candidates who had four votes would be a board member and those who received zero would be removed from consideration. Ms. O'Rourke seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously 5:0.**

Ms. Delf clarified that if three candidates received four votes, there would be a finalist round.

After another round of voting, Ms. Hays voted for Mr. Sequeira, Ms. Jonak, and Ms. Kauffman; Mr. Lafer voted for Ms. Hsu, Mr. Hiura, and Mr. Di Liberto; Chair Newman voted for Mr. Sequeira, Ms. Jonak, and Ms. Kauffman; Ms. O'Rourke voted for Ms. Kauffman, Ms. Hsu, and Mr. Di Liberto; and Ms. Rabasa voted for Ms. Hsu, Mr. Hiura, and Mr. Di Liberto. Mr. Ross and Mr. Isaacson received zero votes and were removed from the ballot.

Mr. Lafer made a motion to appoint Ms. Hasija Kauffman and Mr. Di Liberto to the board. Ms. O'Rourke seconded the motion. Ms. Rabasa said that while she was uncomfortable appointing two members without further voting, she recognized that the minority might stonewall the vote. She wondered whether it might be better to do another round of voting. Chair Newman said that she was voting her conscious and was not trying to stonewall anyone. She cared deeply about the district and was not voting offensively or defensively.

Ms. O'Rourke said that all board members were voting their conscious and asked for compromise. She wanted to vote on Mr. Lafer's proposal. Mr. Lafer said that he was happy to table his motion so that the board could do another round of voting. **The board agreed by unanimous vote to table Mr. Lafer's motion.**

Ms. Rabasa moved to do another round of voting with two votes per board member. Those candidates with zero votes would be removed from the ballot. **The motion did not pass**, with Mr. Lafer, Ms. Rabasa and Ms. O'Rourke voting for the motion and Ms. Hays and Chair Newman against.

Ms. Rabasa asked Ms. Hays why she could not agree to the motion. Ms. Hays said that eliminating candidates would make it more and more difficult to make a compromise.

Ms. Hays moved to vote again with two votes per board member, but not eliminate any candidates. Ms. Newman clarified that anyone who received four votes would become a board member. **The board agreed by unanimous vote.**

After a fourth round of voting, Ms. Hays voted for Mr. Sequeira and Ms. Kauffman; Mr. Lafer for Ms. Hsu and Mr. Di Liberto; Ms. Newman for Mr. Sequeira and Ms. Kauffman; Ms. O'Rourke for Ms. Kauffman and Ms. Hsu; and Ms. Rabasa for Ms. Hsu and Mr. Di Liberto. Mr. Sequeira received 2two votes; Ms. Kauffman, 3, Ms. Hsu, 3 and Mr. Di Liberto, 2. Ms. Jonak and Mr. Hiura did not receive any votes.

After a recess, Mr. Lafer moved to appoint Mr. Di Liberto and Ms. Kauffman to the board. Ms. O'Rourke seconded the motion.

Mr. Lafer said that it was critical to put a teacher on the board. He also understood that the board was in two camps and he was proposing his motion as a way forward.

Chair Newman called for the vote; **The motion did not pass 3:2 with Ms. Rabasa, Ms. O'Rourke and Ms. Di Liberto voting yes, and Ms. Hays and Ms. Newman voting no.**

Ms. Hays moved to appoint Ms. Hasija Kauffman and Ms. Hsu. Ms. O'Rourke seconded the motion. Ms. Rabasa amended the motion to be Ms. Hasija Kauffman and Ms. Jonak. Mr. Lafer seconded the motion. **The amendment failed 2:3 with Ms. Rabasa and Mr. Lafer voting yes, and Ms. Newman, Ms. O'Rourke and Ms. Hays voting no.** Chair Newman called for the vote on the original motion made by Ms. Hays.

Ms. Rabasa said that she would not be the person who caused the motion to fail, but she wished that there had been more compromise. **The vote to appoint Ms. Hsu and Ms. Kauffman passed 5:0.**

Superintendent Vandercar swore Ms. Michelle Hsu in as board member in position 7 for the term beginning that evening, April 27, 2022 through June 30, 2023.

After a brief break, Superintendent Vandercar swore Ms. Keerti Hasija Kauffman via video conference as board member in position 5 for the term beginning that evening, April 27, 2022 through June 30, 2023.

Chair Newman asked Ms. Hsu and Ms. Kauffman to hold the dates May 11 and May 12 for superintendent finalist interviews. May 12 would be the day the board interviewed the candidates. Ms. Fjordbeck would send the board the list of dates and activities.

II. ADJOURN

Chair Newman adjourned the meeting at 8:36 p.m.

Cydney Vandercar

Judy Newman

District Clerk

Board Chair

(Recorded by Eliza Drummond)