

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

Date: March 30, 2022

The Board of Directors of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a special board 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, March 25, 2022 and published in *The Register-Guard* on Monday, March 28, 2022

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS:

Judy Newman, Chair
Alicia Hays (via zoom)
Gordon Lafer
Laural O'Rourke
Maya Rabasa

STAFF:

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

MEDIA:

KRVM

I. SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

Chair Newman called the board meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and noted that all board members were present via video conference.

II. AGENDA REVIEW

There were no changes to the agenda.

III. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

1. Receive an Update on School Board Vacancy Appointment Process

Presenter: Kerry Delf, Chief of Staff

Chair Newman reported that Mary Walston had resigned from Position 7 of the board effective March 21, 2022, and Martina Shabram had resigned from Position 5 of the board effective March 30, 2022.

Chair Newman said that board policy and state law outlined the process to fill the vacancies. Whomever the board appointed would fill the vacant position until June 30, 2023 at which time there would be an open election.

An application process would begin immediately. Anyone within the 4J school district boundaries and was eligible to vote would be eligible to apply to fill the vacancies. Chair Newman introduced Ms. Delf and Ms. Nesbit to give more information.

Ms. Delf said that the board had experienced mid-term vacancies in the past and had a process to follow. The position would be posted and information would be shared widely. The application was available online and by other means. The application period was typically three to four weeks which gave the community time to be aware of the vacancy and to apply.

Ms. Delf shared that in the past, the board had conducted brief interviews with all applicants before electing finalists for further interview and appointment. Ms. Delf suggested that the board set aside Wednesday, April 27 as a possible date for interviews. There was no statutory requirement for a waiting period after appointment.

Ms. Delf said that they had created the application using questions from prior processes and it could be made available immediately if the board made no changes.

Ms. O'Rourke asked whether the twenty-day period was state law or whether the process could be shortened. Ms. Nesbit said that since the positions were at-large and not by zone, there was not a minimum time period.

Mr. Lafer hoped that the new board members could be appointed in time to participate in the superintendent hiring process. His inclination was to focus on an aggressive communication campaign and shorten the application period so that the new members could be appointed by the end of April.

Ms. Delf suggested timelines that allowed the board to narrow the application pool if necessary and make a final decision in late April.

Ms. Hays asked the board members to affirm that they were all in agreement that the new board members would be appointed in time to be part of the superintendent search process. Ms. Rabasa and Ms. O'Rourke agreed that a full board should be in place to hire the new superintendent.

Ms. Hays suggested closing the application process on April 14, holding interviews on April 20 and making a final decision on April 27.

Mr. Lafer wondered how the application pool would be narrowed down if it were too large. In response to a question from Mr. Lafer, Ms. Nesbit and Ms. Delf said that the vote should be made in person. Ms. Delf added some suggestions that might make the process go faster. Ms. Rabasa was reluctant to narrow the field before allowing everyone to interview.

Ms. Hays agreed with Ms. Rabasa.

There was additional discussion about the process and timeline after which Ms. Hays made alternatives suggestions for a timeline: to receive applications by April 18, hold interviews for all applicants on the 20th and possibly the 21st and make a decision by April 27.

After a question from Ms. Rabasa, it was confirmed that the application would be available in Spanish and interpreters would be available as needed.

Chair Newman summarized the process that had been agreed upon so far: The application would be available immediately and submissions would be accepted through 8 a.m. on April 18. The board would begin interviews at 4 p.m. on April 20 and would interview all eligible applicants. There was discussion about whether there would be finalist interviews or whether the board would choose two candidates after one interview. Ms. Rabasa was in support of having finalist interviews. Ms. Hays was not in favor of asking specific questions during the interview, but wanted to allow a candidate to let the board know why they wanted to be on the board.

Ms. Delf gave history on how interviews had occurred in a prior process.

Chair Newman was also in favor of having two rounds of interviews. She again summarized the discussion: candidates would be given three minutes to make their statement and would be given an accommodation if more time or an interpreter was needed. Ms. Rabasa argued that sometimes people needed a little more time to convey their thoughts and she did not want to label someone inadvertently. She wanted to make the process as diverse and accessible as possible.

There was additional discussion about whether there would be one or two rounds of interviews and how long the initial presentation should be.

Chair Newman proposed that final interviews and a final decision would be made on April 27.

In response to Ms. Rabasa's concern about a time limit of three minutes, Ms. Hays suggested that those who needed more time would request it ahead of time.

Chair Newman suggested that the wording could be "three to five minutes" and that a clock could be shown.

Ms. O'Rourke suggested returning April 21 to hear from the finalists and make a final decision. After discussion, it was decided to announce finalists after the meeting at the regular meeting on April 20 and hold finalist interviews and vote on April 25.

There was a discussion regarding how finalists would be chosen. Ms. Nesbit said that the board would need to vote on how to proceed. Ms. Delf clarified that a slate of finalists could be chosen through a vote. Chair Newman suggested selecting candidates individually through a majority vote. Ms. Rabasa reiterated Ms. Hays' suggestion that each board member choose two candidates and that the complete slate be moved forward with the understanding that there would most likely be candidates who were voted for by more than one board member. Ms. O'Rourke wanted to move forward applicants who received a majority vote. In response to Ms. Newman's question, Ms. Delf clarified that each board member would choose four candidates who would be listed in order of votes tallied. The board would then choose by majority vote a slate of top-ranked candidates to move to the finalist round.

The board agreed that they would use the process as outlined by Ms. Delf, not to exceed six finalists.

Ms. Delf summarized the discussion: the board would hold first interviews during the work session on April 20. Each candidate would be given three to five minutes to present why they were pursuing a board appointment. In the regular meeting that evening, the board would ballot to select up to six finalists. Finalists would return on April 25 to be interviewed for ten to fifteen minutes. The board would make a final selection to fill two open board seats on April 27 and swearing in would happen immediately.

Ms. Delf continued that applicants would be able to indicate in their application if they needed an accommodation for their presentation. Superintendent Vandercar suggested having an American Sign Language and a Spanish interpreter onsite. There was additional clarifying conversation.

With respect for Ms. Hays' time constraints, it was decided to discuss Items for Action-1:a and 1:b next.

After voting on the items for action, the board discussed the questions that would be on the initial application. Ms. O'Rourke pointed out that there was no question regarding equity. She added that the question regarding experience and training was leading. She asked to explore the questions through a lens that asked who might be inadvertently left out of the process. Ms. O'Rourke clarified that the question in mind was to give a brief description of one's experience. Mr. Lafer supported adding a question about equity.

Ms. Hays remembered that an equity question had been asked during the interview in prior years.

Ms. Rabasa said it would be best to give an applicant the opportunity to answer questions in an open-ended way so that they could identify what was important to them.

Ms. O'Rourke hoped to ask a question that would indicate the importance of supporting students and staff.

Mr. Lafer suggested wording such as "how would you see yourself contributing to the goal of equity?" Ms. O'Rourke suggested "diversity, equity, and inclusion."

There was further discussion about concerns about how to determine whether an applicant could define their stance on equity and how they would contribute to the goal.

Ms. Delf summarized the changes to the application. Ms. Delf removed the final questions regarding experience in certain areas and added a question about diversity, equity and inclusion.

Chair Newman suggested a question regarding an applicant's connection to the district: were they a student or a parent? What was their involvement? How were they connected to the community?

Ms. O'Rourke suggested adding a link to the year's board goals in the introduction to the application.

In response to a question about the length of responses to questions, Ms. Delf said that most applicants were self-limiting in their responses.

The board was in agreement to move forward with the application.

2. Review Superintendent Selection Process and discuss next steps and timeline

Presenter: Judy Newman, Board Chair

Chair Newman reviewed the timeline for the superintendent search. The teams would consist of board members and representatives from the employee groups, three on a team. The group would be polled to determine their available time.

Ms. O'Rourke asked for more information regarding the process. She wondered whether the board would be visiting candidates in their current locations. Ms. Hays said that it had been very helpful to travel to the finalists' sites. The site visits occurred after the interviews. There was discussion on how to organize the site visits and how to garner genuine feedback from the communities.

The board agreed that they wanted to do the site visits.

IV. ITEMS FOR ACTION

1. Organize the Board of Directors for the remainder of the 2021–22 School Year

a. Elect Board Vice Chair

Presenter: Judy Newman, Board Chair

Chair Newman solicited nominations for Vice Chair. Ms. Hays nominated Maya Rabasa and Ms. O'Rourke seconded the nomination. **The nomination passed unanimously 5:0.**

b. Authorize the Vice Chair to Sign for the District during the remainder of the 2021–22 Fiscal Year

Presenter: Judy Newman, Board Chair

Mr. Lafer moved to authorize Maya Rabasa to sign for the district during the remainder of the 2021-22 Fiscal Year. Ms. O'Rourke seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously 5:0.**

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

1. Consider Meeting Schedule and Discuss Presentations on District Mental Health Resources

Presenter: Judy Newman, Board Chair

Superintendent Vandercar referred to Senate Bill 52, also known as Addie's Act, which gave the district direction on how to respond to suicide. A suicide prevention specialist had been hired to lead the efforts. The board passed policy JHH-Student Suicide Prevention in September 2020.

Training had been implemented to teach the levels of intervention outlined in Senate Bill 52 and included whole child, trauma-informed care to help families and communities understand the signs of suicide.

At the beginning of the school year, district leaders met with Senator Wyden with a goal to implement acute care or licensed training. Students and their families were having to wait too

long to get care. The district hired Roseburg Therapy and were using them more in recent months. The district had also partnered with Lines for Life, a prevention hotline, and had received training from Lane Education Service District.

Superintendent Vandercar had met with the University of Oregon to design training for adults in prevention and response.

Funds received from pandemic relief had been used for wraparound care and other preventions, but the district had not been able to hire additional counselors.

Superintendent Vandercar asked what additional information the board wished to receive. She relayed that since Senate Bill 52 had passed, the district had been working to build their prevention and response. She felt that progress had been made.

Ms. O'Rourke said she had been asking for information since mid-March. Superintendent Vandercar responded that she had sent the policy and the plan the week prior. Ms. O'Rourke reiterated her zero-tolerance policy. She had heard of a universal screening and safety plan provided by Oregon Health Authority. Follow-up care was also provided through referrals. She wished to implement it in the district immediately, starting with the South Eugene region. There was a discussion about why the Suicide Prevention team was listed in the directory under public safety, not mental health.

Ms. O'Rourke continued that it was important to report suicides as soon as they occurred so that parents were prepared to discuss the issue with their students and to provide care and support.

Ms. O'Rourke also asked to increase the salaries of social workers in order to retain them and not lose them to private practice. She mentioned a person she knew who worked at Ophelia's Place and also had a private practice providing life coaching. She suggested exploring life coaching as an alternative model to counseling. She also asked whether funding could be increased for HOOTS (Helping Out Our Teens in Schools), a program of the White Bird Clinic. She said that the suggestions could fill the gap until a crisis center was completed in the upcoming years.

Mr. Lafer suggested the following topics for upcoming presentations: hear from prevention providers and from district leaders on how to move forward. Ms. Rabasa asked to move suicide prevention staff out of the realm of public safety and into mental health, which followed current best practice. She also wanted to hear from a group that included a representative from HOOTS and district leaders. She had sent a report earlier in the year. She also seconded Ms. O'Rourke's idea to create an advisory committee that included staff and community members. Ms. Rabasa continued that she wanted to explore how the district had been influenced by behaviorism and programs such as PBIS (positive behavioral interventions and supports) and whether there might be a better model such as collaborative problem-solving and conscious discipline. She stated that students had been harmed by PBIS.

Chair Newman also wanted to learn what models and programs were being used in the district.

Ms. O'Rourke asked to have the equity lens applied to the current practices. She considered some of them racist.

Mr. Lafer also wanted to hear what behavioral programs were being used and to hear from other districts what was successful for them.

Ms. O'Rourke wanted to prioritize hearing more about universal screening and safety planning. Chair Newman suggested contacting Lane County Public Health.

Chair Newman summarized that first step would be to learn about the screening and come back with more of a plan on April 20.

Ms. O'Rourke reminded the board that the superintendent had authority to act immediately and did not have to wait until the next board meeting.

Ms. Hays reported that she had sent her suggestions to Superintendent Vandercar directly. She wanted to make sure that the board understood their role, which was to bring attention to staff and professionals the necessity to explore the topic of suicide prevention and then let them do the work.

Superintendent Vandercar asked for more clarification on what the board wanted to learn.

Chair Newman and Mr. Lafer suggested to hear more about what steps would be taken after an event; what prevention programs were being used in the district; and how could other programs be used.

Ms. O'Rourke said it was most important to address suicide prevention in a different way with adequate funding.

Ms. Rabasa wanted to hear more about what was being done and by whom, such as a comprehensive directory of care. She also asked for an exploration of caseloads and whether staff were being utilized appropriately for their job description.

Mr. Lafer wanted to hear from senior district leadership, from county health staff and from those who had experience in models that had been successful. Recognizing that suicide was a national issue, he wanted to broaden the scope of exploration for solutions.

Ms. O'Rourke reiterated that the assessment process could be started immediately.

Superintendent Vandercar thanked the board for their explanation of what they wanted to learn in the future. Her first action would be to follow up with Behavioral Health to begin a survey in the South region.

A brief discussion regarding Leadership rotation followed.

Chair Newman asked for additional suggestions for items for board meetings.

Ms. O'Rourke asked to have a discussion about how agenda items were moved from one meeting to another. She wanted to know what the rule was.

Ms. O'Rourke also asked to have a proclamation read at the beginning of every board meeting regarding white supremacy culture. She distributed copies to everyone. She said that the source was the Minnesota Historical Society.

Chair Newman said that two additional executive sessions would be scheduled for the upcoming weeks.

2021-22 Board Meeting Dates:

APRIL: Wednesday, April 6; **Saturday, April 9**; Wednesday, April 13; Wednesday, April 20; Wednesday, April 27

MAY: Wednesday, May 4; Wednesday, May 11; Wednesday, May 18; Wednesday, May 25

JUNE: Wednesday, June 1; Wednesday, June 8; Wednesday, June 22

2022-23 Board Meeting Dates:

JULY: Thursday, July 1, 2021 – Special Board Meeting

AUGUST: Wednesday, August 4 and Wednesday, August 18 – Regular Board Meetings;
August 25 and 28 – Board Retreat Dates

VI. ADJOURN

Chair Newman adjourned the meeting at 9:30 p.m.

Cydney Vandercar
District Clerk

Judy Newman
Board Chair

(Recorded by Eliza Drummond)