

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

Date: September 27, 2023

The Board of Directors (BOD) of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a special Board of Directors (BOD) meeting at 4:00 p.m. in-person at the Education Center, 200 North Monroe Street in Eugene, Oregon, via live-stream and broadcast on KRVM. Notice of the meeting was emailed to the media and posted on the 4J website on September 21, 2023.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Maya Rabasa, Chair
Jenny Jonak, Vice Chair
Tom Di Liberto
Rick Hamilton
Morgan Munro
Judy Newman

STAFF:

Andy Dey, Superintendent
Jenna McCulley, Chief of Staff
Debbie McKim, Executive Assistant / Board Secretary

MEDIA:

KVRM

I. SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

II. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, FLAG SALUTE, AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Chair Rabasa called the work session to order at 4:05 p.m. She said the names of those in attendance and the land acknowledgement. A quorum was established.

III. AGENDA APPROVAL

Chair Rabasa stated that the first candidate scheduled to be interviewed, Alana Folsom, was unable to attend. Therefore, the interviews would begin at 4:45 p.m.

Chair Rabasa asked for discussion. There was no discussion, so Chair Rabasa called for a motion.

MOTION: Ms. Munro moved to approve the consent agenda. Mr. Di Liberto seconded. The motion passed unanimously (6:0:0).

Chair Rabasa called a recess at 4:09 p.m. The meeting was in recess until 4:45 p.m.

Chair Rabasa reconvened the meeting at 4:45 p.m.

IV. ITEMS FOR ACTION – CONSENT AGENDA

IV.1. Oregon Board (OSBA) Elections: Approve Nominee Judy Newman for OSBA
Legislative Policy Committee
Presenter: Jenna McCulley, Chief of Staff

MOTION: Morgan Munro moved to approve the consent agenda. Tom Di Liberto seconded. **Motion passed unanimously 6:0:0.**

V. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

V.1. Interview 7 Finalists for Board Member Position #2, followed by a 30-minute recess
Presenter: Maya Rabasa, Board Chair

Chair Rabasa welcomed Ericka Thessen and explained the interview process. She asked Ms. Thessen if she had a personal statement.

Ms. Thessen said she was there for her commitment to service. She said she believed in public education, a right, as a foundation of democracy. She said she wanted to be of service. Ms. Thessen summarized leadership as compassionate and capable.

Mr. Di Liberto asked: What are the most important things you think the board could work on to improve students' experience and outcomes, whether in academics or in their social and emotional lives? How would you measure success?

Ms. Thessen said to improve parent/guardian involvement, increase student engagement besides the student members, and to conduct regional town halls for students, parents, and the general public. She said to increase what they asked from the district and increase career technical education (CTE) and life skills. Ms. Thessen said when she served on the site council at McCornack, the students told her things they hadn't told parents. She said the district was catching up from COVID and testing gave good information. She said more education supports were important, which included more Education Assistants (EAs) and more librarians. Ms. Thessen said to increase mental health supports for students. She said the district was faced with a change in the needs of students in the past five to six years and to ask students what they need. She suggested use of an anonymous survey. She said the board had to use district resources wisely. She asked if the district could hold group therapy where professionals in the community could work with kids on dealing with depression and anxiety. She said she was a clinician and loved data and wanted to understand the people behind the data. She said as a parent, she had not been asked how she felt about her students' schools. She said surveys were needed for parents/guardians to increase engagement.

Mr. Hamilton asked: Part of the board's role is connecting with the community. What does community engagement look like to you, and what specific ways would you work with the board to engage community stakeholders? What voices do you think are most important for our Board to connect with?

Ms. Thessen replied that public comment was hard. She asked how do you get the important work done in the time allotted while hearing public comment. She said to increase engagement early in the year. She said she enjoyed teachers in the school who

asked her the easiest way to reach her and how to reach her. She said meetings at 4:00 p.m. or 4:30 p.m. were hard for working people. She said to provide food at meetings so more people will come, and this helped her at meetings when she was raising her kids. She said to engage more with working families. She said to partner outside of the district with community partners, such as NAACP, Centro Latino, and students with disability groups. She said to make sure to reach to these groups and ask how the board can be there for them. She said the student unions were amazing and to keep working with them. She said the most important voices to hear from were students with disabilities and their families. She said to increase engagement with them because they are isolated and the most marginalized.

Vice Chair Jonak asked: What constitutes a “high function” school board? Please include what you see as the role of a school board member and their relationship with other board members, the superintendent, and employee groups?

Ms. Thessen said her comments were not directed at former board members or employees. She said a high functioning school board had to be efficient and collaborative. She said it should be centered around the students, not the board members. She said COVID taught us that anything can and will happen and the board has to be tight knit and centered on collaborative goals. She said you need to be able to respond nimbly and understand everyone’s roles and to work together as a team. She said a high-functioning school board did not throw anybody under the bus. She said the superintendent, hiring one, is one of the biggest roles of the board. She said the boards set the goals and helped set policies. The superintendent takes that to staff to make sure it is acted upon. She said to have meetings with employee unions and other employee groups to ask what they need. She said the district does a good job with that.

Ms. Munro asked: How would you work to address the needs of students with disabilities in our school community and/or students receiving Special Education services?

Ms. Thessen said to invest in students who have IEPs and 504s. She said the time it takes in 4J is too long. She said if a parent and student say they need an assessment, they had already been struggling before they ask for a 504. She said less barriers and shorter times to get the 504 was needed. Ms. Thessen said families cannot afford to be assessed by a psychologist and might be uninsured or underinsured. She said the board needed to help all students so they can meet the needs of everyone in the classroom. She said to look at increasing staff education in uses of coregulation techniques. She shared she has two students with autism and did not need an overwhelmed staff member, but an educator who can coregulate.

Ms. Newman asked: Please describe how you would work to eliminate inequities in our school district. What would you bring to this work, and how would you measure success in this area?

Ms. Thessen said to look at resources within the district. She said to do a comprehensive assessment to make sure there are no inequities. She said use of transformative practices would be important. She asked how do we measure success? She said to look at

attendance, grades, and graduation rates and how the students are who are struggling the most in those areas. She cited examples of various kinds of students and asked what are their barriers to attendance, graduation, etc. She said to wrap around students to give them services to help the ones who are struggling the most and determine what we are doing to identify their needs.

Chair Rabasa asked: Imagine you are a member of the School Board, and the Board is scheduled to review the current safety resources and plans. How would you approach this topic to prepare for making decisions about filling gaps or making changes?

Ms. Thessen said at the end of the day, everyone wants their loved ones to be safe at 4J schools. She said to find common ground and that safety looks different to every student and staff. She said to ask students what they need to feel safe. She said she has a child who is autistic who is at times completely mute and gave examples of how familiar staff help her to be comfortable. She said bond money would help. She said to ask what someone needed at that moment and gave an example of her working at the hospital with people in crisis and how she coregulates with them. She said to have nuanced dialogues and that conversation helps people feel good about the district's decisions.

Chair Rabasa thanked Ms. Thessen for joining and explained next steps. She said she was welcome to stay for deliberation at 9:30 p.m. or to join via Zoom. Chair Rabasa called for recess at 5:14 p.m.

Interviews resumed at 5:30 p.m. Chair Rabasa welcomed Laura McGinnis and explained the interview process. She asked Ms. McGinnis if she had a personal statement.

Ms. McGinnis said if she was going to make a personal statement she would repeat what was already submitted to the board.

Mr. Di Liberto asked: What are the most important things you think the board could work on to improve students' experience and outcomes, whether in academics or in their social and emotional lives? How would you measure success?

Ms. McGinnis said there was a long-lasting impact of COVID beyond the pandemic and anticipated that students would feel the effect of the pandemic on a scale of five years versus the initial expectation of three years. She said the district has done a lot to invest in student wellbeing with the new department of student wellbeing. She said social emotional wellbeing will be seen in test scores. She said the district had a new curriculum and was hitting fifty percent proficiency, which was higher than the state. She asked how this impacted teachers at the classroom level with tools and resources. She said the new math curriculum cannot be assessed in the first year and that math and science proficiencies had a long way to go. She said it was good to identify from within the teaching and educational staff what was or was not working, challenges, and where we can mitigate those from a higher level to be given tools to succeed.

Mr. Hamilton asked: Part of the board's role is connecting with the community. What does community engagement look like to you, and what specific ways would you work with the board to engage community stakeholders? What voices do you think are most important for our Board to connect with?

Ms. McGinnis said board perspective, hearing from parents, educators, staff, and neighborhoods in which we operate was important. She said the ability to have listening sessions and to generally build in events was easier for parent stakeholders, especially if other engagement was built in. She said not to ask stakeholders to take time they aren't able to give from an already busy schedule. She said the new podcast was pretty cool and well done. She said to do more from a community outreach perspective or to be as engaged as we have been. She said to engage with media and through social media to ask for feedback and suggested office hours with pre-determined topics for feedback.

Vice Chair Jonak asked: What constitutes a "high function" school board? Please include what you see as the role of a school board member and their relationship with other board members, the superintendent, and employee groups?

Ms. McGinnis mentioned the school board association's set of criteria for a high functioning school board. She said to embrace and collect data and use that to make better decisions and make sure teachers, support staff, and other roles and functions have what they need. She said to make sure the board is working together as a united front. She said everyone has their own roles and areas of expertise and to recognize that through shared vision they were working toward the same goal of student success alongside the superintendent. She said to invest as a board in training and professional development and continue to learn what the board needed to do so support students and staff.

Ms. Munro asked: How would you work to address the needs of students with disabilities in our school community and/or students receiving Special Education services?

Ms. McGinnis said this framing was new to her. She said experience from an inclusion perspective had been amazing compared to when she went to school and applauded the work that had been done and continued to be done for students with disabilities. She said there was always more work to do. She said from a board perspective to ensure investment continued in programs that met student needs and potentially include community resources that normalize classrooms. She said to utilize community partnerships such as the University of Oregon who work in this area and with many of the district's students. She said she still had a lot to learn on this topic and recognized she is not an expert.

Ms. Newman asked: Please describe how you would work to eliminate inequities in our school district. What would you bring to this work, and how would you measure success in this area?

Ms. McGinnis said a number of the inequities that exist aside general diversity of race and income and distribution from those two special perspectives came from the makeup of individual schools and the socio-economic inputs parents put into the school. She said she knows they will not eliminate inequities, but the district could fundraise to fill gaps and utilize collective feedback from parents. She said to invest in a central parent-teacher

association (PTA) and ensure that from a centralized perspective, people are involved in their local PTA or schools as well as the central PTA. She said parent groups could do more to fundraise for funds to be distributed to schools with low-income demographics.

Chair Rabasa asked: You are a member of the School Board, and the Board is scheduled to review the current safety resources and plans. How would you approach this topic to prepare for making decisions about filling gaps or making changes?

Ms. McGinnis said she would have a lot to learn to know what the safety plans were. She said to listen to principals and front office staff when it comes to safety related issues and what happens within the building. She said front office staff are the first staff that parents and students see and there is a lot to learn from them. She said there was a lot to learn from teachers and what they experienced in their classroom. She said from a mental or behavioral perspective to assess wellbeing and challenges coming into the classroom. She said to form focus groups and reports in addition to those already standardized by the district. She said to work in partnership with support services that would support a school or area that experienced challenges or an emergency. She said to work together with emergency services such as Eugene Police Department (EPD), fire emergency, White Bird Clinic, and other supports that were necessary from a crisis emergency perspective.

Chair Rabasa thanked Ms. McGinnis for joining and explained next steps. She said Ms. McGinnis was welcome to stay for deliberation at 9:30 p.m. or to join via Zoom. Chair Rabasa called for recess at 5:49 p.m.

Interviews resumed at 6:16 p.m. Chair Rabasa welcomed Thomas Oommen and explained the interview process. She asked if Mr. Oommen had a personal statement. Mr. Oommen said he did not.

Mr. Di Liberto asked: What are the most important things you think the board could work on to improve students' experience and outcomes, whether in academics or in their social and emotional lives? How would you measure success?

Mr. Oommen said there were a lot of important things competing for priority. He said he wanted to lift up two in particular. He said one was for students in K-12 to focus on identity safe classrooms, focus on classrooms that affirm and see the student's backgrounds whether it be their gender identity, culture, religion, as assets brought into the classroom setting. He said it was important to anchor our work this and have it as a guiding principle. He said the second important priority was teachers and to provide support for teachers to create safer spaces for learning that were anchored in equity, access, and belonging. He said in terms of how success was measured, there were a lot of tools in society, the town, and the district. He said he would like to see greater graduation rates for the most marginalized students in the district, and greater interest in life-long learning. He said he did not know how to measure life-long learning but had seen it in kids who had successfully graduated. He said it was important to measure marginalized and minority youth graduates.

Mr. Hamilton asked: Part of the board's role is connecting with the community. What does community engagement look like to you, and what specific ways would you work with the

board to engage community stakeholders? What voices do you think are most important for our Board to connect with?

Mr. Oommen said to listen to voices that had been silent, to engage voices that had been marginalized and minoritized communities in the district and to ask who preference was given to and commit time to those they don't hear from. He said to find strategies together as a board on how to reach out to communities of people not normally heard from. He said from his experience sitting on the equity committee, the district has sent out surveys and was not receiving responses. He said to use tools to get the voices we want to hear and continue to give preference to a certain segment of the district. He said to strategize together to offer listening sessions and go out to communities to meet people where they are at. He said to think about who was not at the table, who they are not hearing from, and how to reach them in a way that is meaningful to engage them.

Vice Chair Jonak asked: What constitutes a "high function" school board? Please include what you see as the role of a school board member and their relationship with other board members, the superintendent, and employee groups?

Mr. Oommen said it was important to have a strong sense of unity on a school board and to set policies and guidelines that support the leadership in the district to perform their work, and to know they were moving in ways that provided them the agency and ability to make decisions. He said the relationship with other board members and asked himself what was the next best step forward. He said it was important to have different perspectives on the board and referenced the Wright Brothers in that without argument, there would not be flight. He said there needed to be a sense of unity about the board's purpose and a sense to be able to speak their truth and hear others' truths, especially with K-12 kids, and especially those marginalized. He said if the board centered marginalized kids, the other kids would be fine too.

Ms. Munro asked: How would you work to address the needs of students with disabilities in our school community and/or students receiving Special Education services?

Mr. Oomen said at the heart of SPED was equity work. He questioned what policies were in place to provide action and were they helping students in the SPED world.

Ms. Newman asked: Please describe how you would work to eliminate inequities in our school district. What would you bring to this work, and how would you measure success in this area?

Mr. Oomen said he felt like was trying to give a high-level overview without specifics because the board needed to come together to do the work. He said it came back to implement policies that address inequities. He said as an immigrant, he thought a lot about race, gender, language background, and the assimilation process he experienced. He said he brought the ability to listen to others and hear from others what their experiences are. He said he used his experience as a way to empathize with others.

Chair Rabasa asked: You are a member of the School Board, and the Board is scheduled to review the current safety resources and plans. How would you approach this topic to prepare for making decisions about filling gaps or making changes?

Mr. Oommen said safety in classrooms and asked how the current board defined safety and what values were centered in the discussion in order to identify common principles and goals to guide their work to make schools safer. He said to ensure leadership had board support to accomplish their work to make schools identity safe.

Mr. Oommen asked to make a personal statement. He said when this opportunity arose, he wasn't sure that it was the right time for him to apply. He recognized challenges the board has worked with and that it was not easy to do this body of work. He asked the board what they needed at this moment and that he hoped there was something he could contribute to the process. He said he brought a South Asian immigrant perspective to the board and as an educator, he was grateful to have had the opportunity to be an Oregon teacher of the year and to have the opportunity to be part of the teachers experience. He said he was a teacher for 14 years and brought that perspective.

Chair Rabasa thanked Mr. Oommen for joining and explained next steps. She said he was welcome to stay for deliberation at 9:30 p.m. or to join via Zoom. Chair Rabasa called for recess at 6:34 p.m.

Interviews resumed at 6:59 p.m. Chair Rabasa welcomed Scott Fellman and explained the interview process. She asked if Mr. Fellman had a personal statement.

Mr. Fellman said he appreciated being there and the opportunity to present himself as a candidate. He said he was dedicated to better government and to improve society in any way and that he saw education as key government service.

Mr. Di Liberto asked: What are the most important things you think the board could work on to improve students' experience and outcomes, whether in academics or in their social and emotional lives? How would you measure success?

Mr. Fellman said the most important thing they could as a school board to improve student success in those areas was to increase time each student received with teachers. He said this was a long-term complex and money-demanding issue. He said research showed the impact of having time to build a relationship and get to know each other to identify the needs of each student. He said he deferred to subject matter experts where SE kids are served and whether specialists were taking care of needs outside of the classroom or creating more time for them to stay in the classroom with their teachers. He said how to measure success was a complicated, time-consuming process that could be used across all questions presented. He said long-term to ask kids how it was going, ask teachers short-term, and compare to national data. He said to combine with test scores already gathered. He said a piece missing was long-term exit interviews with students, staff, and parents in five-, ten-, or twenty-year increments to identify gaps and receive recommendations.

Mr. Hamilton asked: Part of the board's role is connecting with the community. What does community engagement look like to you, and what specific ways would you work with the board to engage community stakeholders? What voices do you think are most important for our Board to connect with?

Mr. Fellman said all of local government was part of the community, and we all participated and had our own views on how things go. He said community engagement was getting

out of your bubble to connect with others. He said he was aware of privilege, and he had spent half of his adult life in service to every demographic of people in this town. He said community engagement meant being aware and sharing awareness of all communities to make sure no one went unheard, and no ones' needs went unaddressed. He said to explain outwardly what the board was doing, their concerns, and how they were addressing their concerns. He said this could be done through listening sessions, surveys, or online communication to catch different parts of the community. He said it was most important for the board to connect with those whose socio-economic status either did not have time or comfort to come forward. He said board time and capacity was limited, so they could coordinate closely to get board members to communicate to the community as much as possible and bring back information to share and amplify voices that way.

Vice Chair Jonak asked: What constitutes a "high function" school board? Please include what you see as the role of a school board member and their relationship with other board members, the superintendent, and employee groups?

Mr. Fellman referenced a favorite book series where in the end it was clear no one said the same thing twice just to hear themselves speak. He said this had been his definition of a high functioning group, and the ability to speak freely in honest and open conversation even when it was hard to do. He said the role of a board member was complex because there are many relationships and policy making. He said to be visible to staff and not interfere with what staff do, and for parents and students to know you cared about their needs and what you were doing to meet those needs. He said to listen and recognize that other board members are not advisories and had a unified goal. He said to instill a culture that looked back on what they have done and how they can improve.

Ms. Munro asked: How would you work to address the needs of students with disabilities in our school community and/or students receiving Special Education services?

Mr. Fellman said he felt that since he was not an educator he was not qualified to give perspectives. He said as a policy maker his role would be to make sure the stakeholders who needed to be in conversation were included. He said to reach out with different options of communication to be accessible and to have a constant approach of checking in. He said to follow up after graduation to identify how they met students' needs. He asked how they could apply and leverage experience across the district and to make sure teachers were involved in that process.

Ms. Newman asked: Please describe how you would work to eliminate inequities in our school district. What would you bring to this work, and how would you measure success in this area?

Mr. Fellman said the first thing they would need to do was identify the inequities and ensure they were aware of all needs and applied methods mentioned in the last question to do that. He said what seemed to cause conflict around the nation around school board policy was a lack of common understanding around those needs. He said education was needed about what we do about those needs and understand why we focused on certain things and why they were important. He said fear got in the way of success and the best thing they could do was acknowledge those fears and explain how policy was being applied. He said measuring success would be a combination of current information about how it seemed to be going to students, staff, and other stakeholders, and to compare what

other districts might be doing and evaluating their outcomes. He said it came down to people who had relationships and trust with others in the district who were willing to share their experiences.

Chair Rabasa asked: You are a member of the School Board, and the Board is scheduled to review the current safety resources and plans. How would you approach this topic to prepare for making decisions about filling gaps or making changes?

Mr. Fellman said the first thing to do was figure out where they were by conducting a risk assessment. He said to evaluate what the public safety issues were the district faced, what they were for individuals at risk, and vulnerable students, teachers, and civilian staff's individual needs. He said to look historically at what problems they have had and what was done, what resources they had and how they have benefited or caused problems to those with different safety needs. He said safety varied from the worst-case scenario of an active shooter to tripping hazards for students. He said the most important step was to understand what the needs were through risk assessments. He said once they had that assessment, to look at what resources they had locally and compare to best practices nationally and internationally. He said to look at what the district could and could not afford to do and establish priorities and community resources. He said to identify where at-risk communities were involved, identify risk factors, and build into implementation a way to check in with those people. He said to apply an ongoing improvement approach and build that process into policy to avoid being surprised somewhere down the road. He said to set up the process for long-term success.

Chair Rabasa thanked Mr. Fellman for joining and explained next steps. She said he was welcome to stay for deliberation at 9:30 p.m. or to join via Zoom. Chair Rabasa called for recess at 7:22 p.m.

Chair Rabasa advised interviews had concluded as Jensina Hawkins had withdrawn her application. The board determined 15 minutes of deliberation were needed. Chair Rabasa called for recess at 8:25 p.m.

VI. ITEMS FOR ACTION

VI.1. Select an Applicant Finalist to Fill Board Member Position #2

Presenter: Maya Rabasa, Board Chair

Chair Rabasa resumed the meeting at 8:41 p.m. Chair Rabasa reviewed the voting process that was unanimously approved by the board.

The board submitted their Round 1 selections to the Board Secretary to tally. There was not a candidate with four or more votes and the board moved into a second round of voting.

The board submitted their Round 2 selections to the Board Secretary to tally. Ericka Thessen was the only candidate to receive four or more votes.

MOTION: Vice Chair Jonak moved to appoint Ericka Thessen to fill the open position #2 on the board of directors. Morgan Munro seconded. **Motion passed unanimously 6:0:0.**

Chair Rabasa thanked the candidates who were not selected and asked they consider applying for the budget committee or reach out for ways to connect with the district.

VII. ADJOURN

Chair Rabasa adjourned the meeting at 8:50 p.m.



Andy Dey
District Clerk



Maya Rabasa
Board Chair

*(Recorded by Laura Campbell and Jackie Low, LCOG)
Approved on 11/01/2023*