

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

Date: December 11, 2023

The Board of Directors (BOD) of Eugene School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a special board meeting at 5:00 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 December 8, 2023.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Maya Rabasa, Chair
Jenny Jonak, Vice Chair (online)
Tom Di Liberto
Rick Hamilton
Morgan Munro
Judy Newman
Ericka Thessen

STAFF:

Andy Dey, Superintendent
Debbie McKim, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/Board Secretary
Sherry Moore, Executive Assistant to the Chief of Staff

EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATIONS:

None.

MEDIA:

KRVM

I. SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

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

Chair Rabasa called the special board meeting to order at 5:08 p.m. She read the names of the board members present. Vice Chair Jonak joined virtually. Superintendent Dey led the group in reciting the flag salute and Chair Rabasa read the Land Acknowledgement statement.

III. AGENDA APPROVAL

The agenda was approved as presented.

IV. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

1. BUDGET COMMITTEE SELECTION PROCESS AND INTERVIEWS

Chair Rabasa presented the Budget Committee selection process, explaining that the Eugene School District 4J Board of Directors (BOD) will conduct a series of panel interviews thereby selecting applicants to fill five vacancies on the Budget Committee. Each applicant has ten minutes total to answer three questions.

Dave Wallace

Mr. Wallace responded to the first question, "If faced with a budget decrease in 4J, how would you approach making the needed adjustments and why?"

Mr. Wallace said he would look at the different recommendations and determine how they align with the district's three main goals, with an extra emphasis on equitable outcomes. He said because he is the parent of children in 4J and an educator himself, he has a vested interest and expertise.

Mr. Wallace responded to the second question, "What would make you feel a sense of accomplishment by the end of your term on the budget committee?"

Mr. Wallace said getting to a place of sustainability and being part of something that takes steps toward accomplishing educational equity.

Mr. Wallace responded to the third question "Is there anything else that you want us to know about you?"

Mr. Wallace said that his family moved to Eugene three years ago, and although he does not have a lot of reach out, many people recognize him from the charter school. He added that budget and school finance was his area of expertise back in Wisconsin.

Abby Stillie

Ms. Stillie responded to the first question "If faced with a budget decrease, how would you approach making the needed adjustments and why?"

Ms. Stillie said with so many competing priorities in the district, there needs to be a guiding compass for decision making. She would focus on equity and safety – she believes that is in line with board priorities. She would carefully consider the relevant data and use that to guide decisions. She stated the importance of schools serving the most vulnerable students having the resources they need. She added that she would look carefully at the budget for extraneous things to cut.

Ms. Stillie responded to the second question, "What would make you feel a sense of accomplishment by the end of your term on the budget committee?"

Ms. Stillie said her goal with the budget committee is to get a better understanding of the limits and possibilities for students. Right now, she does not understand those limitations and possibilities well enough. She wants a fuller understanding of the budget. She would feel a sense of accomplishment if she were able to participate in making decisions that keep students and staff safer and equitably distribute funds to schools in a way that supports our most vulnerable students.

Ms. Stillie responded to the third question, "Is there anything else that you want us to know about you?"

Ms. Stillie said in college she was vice president of student government and responsible for giving funding to student groups and clubs. She shared that she is used to figuring out a way to distribute funds.

Courtney Salic

Ms. Salic responded to the first question, "If faced with a budget decrease, how would you approach making the needed adjustments and why?"

Ms. Salic responded that the first thing to look at is comparison of budget from the prior year to determine if there is the possibility of reallocating funds from one budget to another. The second thing is to determine what is a high priority v low priority.

Ms. Salic responded to the second question, "What would make you feel a sense of accomplishment by the end of your term on the budget committee?"

Ms. Salic said what would make her feel a sense of accomplishment is engaging in good discussions within the budget committee to ensure they are doing due diligence to create the best budget for the community. She said she has experience in finance and helping others with less experience would make her feel a sense of accomplishment.

Ms. Salic responded to the third question, "Is there anything else that you want us to know about you?"

Ms. Salic said she has twelve years in finance experience. She has five years in finance experience working for a global retailer. She cited experience performing accounting for a local housing authority and Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB). She said the breadth of her experience would come in useful on the budget committee. Additionally, Ms. Salic is fluent in Spanish and has three children who attend schools within 4J.

Scott Fellman

Mr. Fellman responded to the first question "If faced with a budget decrease, how would you approach making the needed adjustments and why?"

Mr. Fellman said he would approach it in two parts. First, understanding where the decrease is coming from, and if it is long or short term. Secondly, looking at district priorities, fixed costs, discretionary costs, vacancies, staffing needs, and ultimately deciding where to save money that still allows kids to get the education services that they need. He added that at the end of the day the priority is providing an education to the students. He said it is also important to get feedback from staff for direct input about possible places to cut costs.

Mr. Fellman responded to the second question, "What would make you feel a sense of accomplishment by the end of your term on the budget committee?"

Mr. Fellman said one overarching value of his is that public education is underfunded. He said if you don't have enough money to attract staff, retain staff, maintain buildings, etc. then it makes it hard to keep up with the changing world that our students are growing up in. He said class sizes continue to get bigger and bigger with more demands placed on teachers. He said reducing class sizes down to a reasonable number is a priority. He suggested the only way to get support for that kind of budget is getting better information out to public about how their [tax] dollars are being spent, how effective those [tax] dollars are, and helping to understand the benefits of their [tax] dollars, not just for the students, but for them. An accomplishment for him would be finding some

ways to get that information out. He added that he aims to improve the budget process overall.

Mr. Fellman responded to the third question, "Is there anything else that you want us to know about you?"

Mr. Fellman said he really likes to try to find new ways to do things while still respecting that the way that we're doing things now came from somebody's experience. He is more likely to want to be involved in conversations about exploring things in new ways.

Harry Sanger

Mr. Sanger responded to the first question "If faced with a budget decrease, how would you approach making the needed adjustments and why?"

Mr. Sanger said he would look at what expenditures are required, and what has changed in past budgets. Then he would look to get community input to determine priorities for what the adjustments would be. He said he would look for opportunities to raise additional revenue to help cover the gap.

Mr. Sanger responded to the second question, "What would make you feel a sense of accomplishment by the end of your term on the budget committee?"

He said passing a budget in accordance with the integrated guidance for aligning student success. Moreso, with buy in and support from the 4J community. He said having everyone happy with the budget would be a good metric for success. He cited the importance of mental health supports and interventions as a priority. He said hiring more librarians is a priority of his. He added that finding a way to make sure the Yujin Gakuen families feel really heard in the budgeting process is important to him as well.

Mr. Sanger responded to the third question, "Is there anything else that you want us to know about you?"

Mr. Sanger said he gets a kick out of numbers and statistics. He has been coaching his kid's soccer team and places importance on extracurricular activities including, but not limited to, sports. In terms of the budget, he is an advocate of making sure they are prioritizing play as well as learning.

Brooke Stehley (Zoom)

Ms. Stehley responded to the first question "If faced with a budget decrease, how would you approach making the needed adjustments and why?"

Ms. Stehley responded that she would look overall at what has been spent to what the budget is and question if they are under budget. Then think where outside the box about where to bring in additional funding.

Ms. Stehley responded to the second question, "What would make you feel a sense of accomplishment by the end of your term on the budget committee?"

Ms. Stehley said she would look at the objectives and goals they are trying to accomplish. She suggested getting down to the user level and asking if they accomplished what was needed rather than just checking a box. She suggested assessing if they achieved success and the expected outcomes.

Ms. Stehley responded to the third question, "Is there anything else that you want us to know about you?"

Ms. Stehley said she is the parent of a 4J second grader. In the professional sense, she is a problem solver. She enjoys learning how something works, getting down to the user experience, digging in and finding how it works to optimize it for everyone.

Adam Rue

Mr. Rue responded to the first question "If faced with a budget decrease, how would you approach making the needed adjustments and why?"

Mr. Rue said he has experience going through budget reductions and his approach was figuring out what is driving the budget gap and finding out how to bridge the gap. He said spending time to understand issues related to what is driving the budget and know what the legal [budget] requirements are v what is discretionary. He added communication with decision makers and relevant stakeholders.

Mr. Rue responded to the second question, "What would make you feel a sense of accomplishment by the end of your term on the budget committee?"

Mr. Rue said being a member of the community and parent of three children in 4J community it is important to him to be involved in the process. He has been heavily involved in school sports and serving on the budget committee would be a nice step for him in terms of volunteering. Mr. Rue said his professional experience is in finance and he served on the Lane Regional Air Protection Agency (LRAPA) budget committee.

Mr. Rue responded to the third question, "Is there anything else that you want us to know about you?"

Mr. Rue reemphasized that he's worked on other budget committees and in a collaborative environment. He added that a horizontal, group approach is something he has valued, and he is committed to 4J.

Daniel Fagan

Mr. Fagan responded to the first question, "If faced with a budget decrease, how would you approach making the needed adjustments and why?"

Mr. Fagan said he would start by analyzing required v discretionary spending and examine how to do more with less. He suggested going through a thorough process in analyzing underperforming areas and getting input from key stakeholders.

Mr. Fagan responded to the second question, "What would make you feel a sense of accomplishment by the end of your term on the budget committee?"

Mr. Fagan responded by fulfilling the requirements of the committee and making sure the needs are met for the position. Mr. Fagan has always been interested in the school board operations. He thinks it would be a great learning experience for him. He added that he will soon have two students in 4J.

Mr. Fagan responded to the third question, "Is there anything else that you want us to know about you?"

He said he has done a lot of financial analysis, budget, and financing, and that is why he wanted to apply for the budget committee. He added that he is 4J alumnus.

Amy Fellows

Ms. Fellows responded to the first question “If faced with a budget decrease, how would you approach making the needed adjustments and why?”

Ms. Fellows said she would first understand what the requirements are in terms of statute and law. Secondly, she would look to the two seasoned budget members for guidance. She said she would like to hear from the stakeholders about their priorities and examine those alongside district and board goals. She said prioritizing equity and civil rights. Ms. Fellows added that she would get more information about potential bonds and funds and understanding options for increasing funding.

Ms. Fellows responded to the second question, “What would make you feel a sense of accomplishment by the end of your term on the budget committee?”

She said being able to pass budgets that the board, district and community feel good about and uplift our most vulnerable students. She said having a better understanding about how state policy impacts the funding as well as the local tax base, and how IDEA funds are spent and how the funds can support the students that they are intended for.

Ms. Fellows responded to the third question, “Is there anything else that you want us to know about you?”

She said she is the parent of 4J charter school parent and is herself a 4J alumni. Both of her parents were educators. She is on the school-based health center alliance and the Lane County systems of care and statewide systems of care policy committee. In her profession, she helps inform the public about systems change. She is interested in exploring how to educate the public and involve the stakeholders in the school district budget process.

Kristen Henry

Ms. Henry responded to the first question “If faced with a budget decrease, how would you approach making the needed adjustments and why?”

Ms. Henry said she would approach it creatively and in a way that does not negatively impact the health and wellbeing of students. She would look at the data to determine ways to reduce spending. She suggested simple things like using less paper, cheaper school lunches; or ways to not cut staff or negatively impact learning.

Ms. Henry responded to the second question, “What would make you feel a sense of accomplishment by the end of your term on the budget committee?”

Ms. Henry said that students having a positive learning environment that does not cut into staff learning or additional resources for students.

Ms. Henry responded to the third question, “Is there anything else that you want us to know about you?”

Ms. Henry said her background and career is in social work in Lane County. She began in crisis work, serving foster youth, and international adoption. Now she works for a local

nonprofit, and although she no longer works with children, she misses it. Ms. Henry is the parent of two children in 4J, and desires to become civically engaged in the school district.

Sarah Hagen

Ms. Hagen responded to the first question “If faced with a budget decrease, how would you approach making the needed adjustments and why?”

Ms. Hagen responded that she would focus on the primary mission of our school district, i.e. educating children. She said the number one priority is supporting teachers, EAs, and counselors, followed by the rest of the values of the school district. She emphasized consulting with the community about their priorities. She suggested funding long term projects and cutting short term programming. Ms. Hagen said she cares a lot about statistics and evidence-based practices. Through that lens, she said determining where the district has seen demonstrated success v programs they are experimenting with.

Ms. Hagen responded to the second question, “What would make you feel a sense of accomplishment by the end of your term on the budget committee?”

Ms. Hagen said what would make her feel accomplished is if by the end of her term she was a respected participant in a series of meetings that felt productive and on task resulting in a positive budget. If she were ambitious, it would be using her financial knowledge to improve the budget process.

Ms. Hagen responded to the third question, “Is there anything else that you want us to know about you?”

Ms. Hagen explained that before her current job was assistant visiting professor at Western Oregon University. She taught the highest and lowest math classes that the department offered. Through that experience, she saw a wide range of math readiness coming out of Oregon high schools. She said she was struck by the financial burden placed on the poorest students when they had to pay for entry level math classes in college. She said it made her think about paying more attention to school budgets. Today she teaches at a school for gifted students. This range has opened her eyes to how ambitious education can be. She said it is important to have both perspectives: both incredibly hopeful and concerned for some students in some schools. She wants to be part of the help instead of turning a blind eye to it.

Alexander Aghdaei

Mr. Aghdaei responded to the first question “If faced with a budget decrease, how would you approach making the needed adjustments and why?”

Mr. Aghdaei said he would first emphasize the students and question what is going to be the least detrimental to them. He suggested prioritizing a stable educational environment. Secondly, he emphasized transparency. He said sometimes people get left out of decisions and/or are surprised by the outcome. He said evaluating what programs are working, that they are being implemented in the most efficient way, that the money spent getting the desired returns, and continuing to provide the crucial services.

Mr. Aghdaei responded to the second question, “What would make you feel a sense of accomplishment by the end of your term on the budget committee?”

He said he is a current university student at University of Oregon (UO) and active in education policy. He has a deep passion for improving the school system. He is excited about the early literacy success initiative, free school lunches, etc. He has a desire to be in the room to help allocate the budgets on a more granular level than he's had the opportunity to do before.

Mr. Aghdaei responded to the third question, "Is there anything else that you want us to know about you?"

Mr. Aghdaei said while he might not be the most financially savvy applicant in the pool, he is a student who is well connected in the community and has been active in the creation of new policies that tie into the work of the budget committee. His perspective as a student who experienced Covid while being in high school could bring something unique to the budget committee: student perspective.

V. ITEMS FOR ACTION

1. SELECT APPLICANTS TO SERVE ON THE BUDGET COMMITTEE

Chair Rabasa explained the process for selecting applicants to serve on the budget committee. She instructed the BOD to fill out their ballots. After staff tallied the ballots, Chair Rabasa welcomed the five new budget committee members: Amy Fellows (1-year term), Scott Fellman (3-year term), Courtney Salic (3-year term), Abby Stillie (3-year term) and Dave Wallace (1-year term).

A random number generator was used to determine term length.

VI. ADJOURN

Chair Rabasa adjourned the special meeting at 8:43 p.m.



Andy Dey
District Clerk



Maya Rabasa
Board Chair

(Recorded by LCOG)
Approved on 01/24/2024