

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

Date: January 22, 2025

The Board of Directors (BOD) of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Oregon, held a work session at 6:00 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 January 17, 2025.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jenny Jonak, Chair

Tom Di Liberto, Vice Chair

Maya Rabasa

Ericka Thessen

Judy Newman

Rick Hamilton

Morgan Munro

STAFF:

Colt Gill, Interim Superintendent

Carmen Xiomara Urbina, Chief of Staff

Matt Brown, Director of Finance

Lisa Fjordbeck, Operations Coordinator for the Superintendent

Cynthia Calletano, Executive Assistant to the Chief of Staff and Board

Debbie McKim, Executive Assistant to the Interim Superintendent and Board

EMPLOYEE GROUPS:

None.

OTHER:

None.

MEDIA:

KRVM

I. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL

Chair Jonak called the work session to order at 6:01 p.m. She said the names of the board members who were present.

II. AGENDA APPROVAL

Ms. Rabasa suggested moving Item for Future Action: Item One to the Item for Action section of the agenda. The agenda was approved as amended.

III. RECEIVE PUBLIC COMMENT ON FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2024 AUDIT

There were no public comments.

IV. COMMENTS BY EMPLOYEE GROUPS

There were no comments by employee groups.

V. CONSENT GROUP – ITEMS FOR ACTION

1. APPROVE DRAFT MINUTES FOR BOARD WORK SESSION HELD ON JANUARY 8, 2025

MOTION: Vice Chair Di Liberto moved to approve the consent group. Ms. Thessen seconded. **The motion passed unanimously, 7:0:0; Chair Jonak, Vice Chair Di Liberto, Ms. Thessen, Ms. Newman, Ms. Rabasa, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

VI. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

None.

VII. ITEMS FOR ACTION

1. APPROVE FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2024 AUDIT (SECOND READ)

Finance Director Matt Brown introduced approval of the FY24 audit.

There was no discussion.

MOTION: Vice Chair Di Liberto moved to approve the Fiscal Year 2024 audit. Ms. Munro seconded. **The motion passed unanimously; 7:0:0; Chair Jonak, Vice Chair Di Liberto, Ms. Thessen, Ms. Newman, Ms. Rabasa, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

2. APPROVE RESOLUTION #2025-01 AFFIRMING GENDER IDENTITY, EXPRESSION, AND EQUITY FOR TRANSGENDER AND GENDER-EXPANSIVE STUDENTS AND STAFF (SECOND READ)

Chief of Staff Carmen Xiomara Urbina introduced approval of Resolution #2025-01 – Affirming Gender Identity, Expression, and Equity for Transgender and Gender-Expansive Students and Staff.

Ms. Rabasa expressed gratitude for the work that went into the resolution, particularly bringing in community expertise and perspective.

Ms. Urbina shared that in 2015 – in response to reports of students feeling unsafe – Eugene School District 4J was the first to put such a policy forward. She stated that Resolution #2025-01 is a declaration of support, equity, justice, and love. She added that

the protection of LGBTQ2SIA+ is not a choice, but a duty. Ms. Urbina thanked the Board of Directors (BOD) for their support of the resolution.

Chair Jonak said the resolution is one that the BOD is proud to stand behind.

MOTION: Vice Chair Di Liberto moved to approve Resolution #2025-01 – Affirming Gender Identity, Expression, And Equity For Transgender And Gender-Expansive Students And Staff. Ms. Rabasa seconded. **The motion passed unanimously; 7:0:0; Chair Jonak, Vice Chair Di Liberto, Ms. Thessen, Ms. Newman, Ms. Rabasa, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

3. APPROVE REVISIONS TO POLICY JBC – AFFIRMING GENDER IDENTITY, EXPRESSION, AND EQUITY FOR TRANSGENDER AND GENDER-EXPANSIVE STUDENTS (FIRST READ)

There was no discussion.

MOTION: Vice Chair Di Liberto moved to approve revisions to Policy JBC – Affirming Gender Identity, Expression, And Equity For Transgender And Gender-Expansive Students. Ms. Munro seconded. **The motion passed unanimously; 7:0:0; Chair Jonak, Vice Chair Di Liberto, Ms. Thessen, Ms. Newman, Ms. Rabasa, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

4. APPROVE NEW POLICY GBAA – AFFIRMING GENDER IDENTITY, EXPRESSION, AND EQUITY FOR TRANSGENDER AND GENDER-EXPANSIVE STAFF (FIRST READ)

There was no discussion.

MOTION: Vice Chair Di Liberto moved to approve Policy GBAA – Affirming Gender Identity, Expression, And Equity For Transgender And Gender-Expansive Staff. Ms. Newman seconded. **The motion passed unanimously; 7:0:0; Chair Jonak, Vice Chair Di Liberto, Ms. Thessen, Ms. Newman, Ms. Rabasa, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

5. APPROVE SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 2992 – THE “STUDENTS SEE CLEARLY ACT” CREATING A STATEWIDE PROGRAM DESIGNED TO PROVIDE OPTOMETRIC SERVICES AND PRESCRIPTION EYEGLASSES AT NO COST TO THE STUDENTS OR THEIR FAMILIES

Interim Superintendent Colt Gill introduced approving support for House Bill 2992 – the “Students See Clearly Act.” He reported that HB2992 is going before the House Education Committee on January 29, 2025. The bill’s sponsor has requested a panel to present the bill to the committee. They have invited Interim Superintendent Gill to participate, pending approval from the BOD.

MOTION: Vice Chair Di Liberto moved to approve support for House Bill 2992 – The “Students See Clearly Act” Creating A Statewide Program Designed To Provide Optometric Services And Prescription Eyeglasses At No Cost To The Students Or Their Families. Mr. Hamilton seconded. **The motion passed unanimously, 7:0:0; Chair Jonak, Vice Chair Di Liberto, Ms. Thessen, Ms. Newman, Ms. Rabasa, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

6. APPROVE SUPPORT FOR STATE CAPITAL (LOTTERY) FUNDS FOR LOCAL PROJECTS BENEFITING STUDENTS

Chair Jonak introduced approving support for state capital (lottery) funds for local projects benefiting students. She referenced a handout provided in the meeting packet.

She explained that the Lane County Coalition of Recreation Arts and Athletics (CORAA), which focuses on increasing recreation, economic development, and cultural spaces in Lane County, is seeking allies to sign their letter of support for state capital lottery funds. Among other local projects, the funds would contribute toward the completion of 24 pickleball courts at Lane Community College (LCC). Included for reference is a letter of support from the Eugene Education Foundation (EEF). Chair Jonak explained that the organization is requesting a draft letter of support from the BOD.

Following a request for further clarification around identifying legislative priorities during a long session, Interim Superintendent Gill noted that while the optometric and support for state capital lottery funds do request funding from the state, they do *not* compete with the state school funding the BOD has already prioritized.

MOTION: Vice Chair Di Liberto moved to direct the superintendent to write a letter of support on behalf of the BOD in favor of state capital lottery funds for local projects benefiting students. Ms. Thessen seconded. **The motion passed unanimously, 7:0:0; Chair Jonak, Vice Chair Di Liberto, Ms. Thessen, Ms. Newman, Ms. Rabasa, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

VIII. ITEMS FOR ACTION AT A FUTURE MEETING

1. CONSIDER FOR APPROVAL THE PROPOSED REVISIONS TO BOARD POLICY DI—FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES

Mr. Brown introduced the topic of proposed revisions to Policy DI – Financial Management Policies.

He explained that there are seven main sections in Policy DI. To further simplify the policy he is recommending the following revisions to sections one and two:

Section 1: Resource Planning and Allocation Policies

- Reinforcing current practices

- Quarterly reports to superintendent and Board focused on informing, educating, and communicating financial stability
- Semiannually updating the financial forecast for the General Fund highlighting resource and expense requirements to make better financial decisions
- Removing unnecessary and confusing language
 - Roles and purpose of the Budget Committee
 - Budget preparation process

Section 2: Accounting and Financial Policies

- Added language and processes for audit communication with the Board and Oregon Department of Education (ODE)
- Added language to strengthen definitions and intended use of Reserve Funds, Contingency Funds, and Unappropriated Funds
- Reinforces language for flexibility of changes in reserve amounts in the future by the Board

Regarding reserves, Mr. Brown explained the difference between contingency and unappropriated funds. Contingency funds are appropriated for use and are available to transfer. Unappropriated funds are unable to be used except in the event of a declaration of emergency (such as the previous COVID pandemic). Currently, district policy requires a minimum of 5% total reserves (3% contingency, 2% unappropriated). The financial department and Interim Superintendent are recommending increasing to a minimum of 8% total reserves (3% contingency, 5% unappropriated).

Mr. Brown engaged the BOD in a discussion.

Ms. Newman, who sits on the policy work group, offered that she believes the percentage should be higher – up to 9.5% total reserves (4.5% contingency, 5% unappropriated). She cited challenging budgeting scenarios, including an upcoming 24% PERS increase, a 37% increase in staffing, and a federal administration less supportive of public education. Ms. Newman stated that the district needs to adjust and soften the pathway to living within their allocations. Given her experience with budgets through reduction times, it is in the district's best interest to have more contingency funds with the intention of creating a more gradual glide path to spending within limits of incoming revenue and holding some reserves for inevitable emergencies.

Chair Jonak requested information about reserve policy percentages at comparable school districts.

Interim Superintendent Gill provided the following reserve policy percentages for neighboring and/or comparable school districts: Bethel: 12.5%, Tualatin: 12%, Portland:

10%, Gresham: 8%, Salem, Beaverton, North Clackamas: 5%, Springfield and Hillsboro: 4%.

Ms. Rabasa said she is not convinced that change is needed as recent district reserves have been exceptionally large. She is cited the unknown impact of federal funding and current bargaining with classified staff. She suggested the decision be made alongside the district's new/incoming superintendent.

Vice Chair Di Liberto said he is interested to know the district's historic reserve policy percentages.

In response to Ms. Rabasa's comment about high reserves, Ms. Newman pointed out that the district has benefited from increases in state school funding over the past few years. She added that the district is spending far above what it is bringing in, and cited a fifty percent reduction in the reserve fund over one year.

Ms. Thessen asked Mr. Brown if Title funding were to be lost in the next 12 months, which reserve percentage would be more beneficial: 5% or 8%?

Mr. Brown responded that the 8% reserve percentage would be better; adding that such changes would be an indication of the need for a higher contingency and slightly lower unappropriated.

Ms. Munro asked what the district's monthly staffing costs amount to.

Mr. Brown responded that monthly staffing costs amount to roughly \$25 million.

Ms. Munro stated that 8% of \$18 million would not necessarily cover that given a highly unlikely event.

Mr. Brown responded affirmatively. He said it would require 9.3% to cover expenditures.

Ms. Munro asked if the district were to lose funding midway through the school year, would they use contingency funds?

Mr. Brown responded affirmatively, stating that contingency funds could be appropriated to pay for salaries, benefits, materials, and services. He said that having available contingency funds buys the district time and prevents immediate layoffs or program closures.

In response to questions posed by Chair Jonak, there was some discussion around the budget process. Mr. Brown explained that although long-term forecasting always shows that the district will be in the red, incremental budget adjustments prevent it from ever happening.

Ms. Rabasa questioned that since the reserve policy does not preclude the district from having reserves higher than the minimum, what is the point of changing the minimum? She also raised concern about deleting rather than revising policies.

Mr. Brown responded that he will look for opportunities to preserve policy changes.

Interim Superintendent Gill responded to Ms. Rabasa's question by suggesting that if policy is not set by the BOD, it is determined by staff. There is more stability when a school board sets the policy and a target for staff (i.e. target setting). It also allows for a school board to name what is important to them.

Ms. Newman reiterated the importance of setting guidance and parameters in order to serve kids and keep the workforce stable. She said now is the time, not in the heat of the moment.

Ms. Munro agreed, reemphasizing that the BOD should identify a prudent amount of money for reserves. She highlighted several budgetary challenges that the district could potentially face, namely the rapid spending down of reserves.

Chair Jonak raised concern about the cost of putting more money into reserves, specifically the impact on the needs of current students. She said in a perfect world those things would not be in opposition.

Ms. Thessen said she would like to hear public input and feedback from employee groups.

Mr. Hamilton echoed Chair Jonak's previous statement, commenting that it is difficult to weigh the here-and-now versus future needs.

Ms. Rabasa requested not voting on the topic until they have received community input and after the next Budget Committee meeting.

Mr. Brown responded that because it is time sensitive, he recommends inviting Budget Committee members to the next BOD meeting scheduled for February 5, 2025. There is not an official Budget Committee until April. He said the BOD can opt to create a Budget Committee meeting in the interim if preferred.

There was discussion about best practice for engaging the Budget Committee. Interim Superintendent Gill said he will follow up with the BOD after checking in with general counsel.

2. CONSIDER FOR APPROVAL: REVISIONS TO POLICY CBC— SUPERINTENDENT CONTRACT

Interim Superintendent Gill introduced approval of Revisions to Policy CBC – Superintendent Contract.

He highlighted two new provisions:

1. A school board cannot issue a contract that includes terms which direct the superintendent to take any action that conflicts with local, state, or federal laws.
2. Relating to employment contracts: in the event of a mutually agreed upon termination without cause provision, that provision must include a twelve-month notice of termination for such a provision.

Ms. Munro noted that the twelve-month notice of termination could extend past an employee's contract terms.

Interim Superintendent Gill said he understands it to be twelve months *or* the amount of time remaining on their contract.

Ms. Munro requested policy language reflecting that.

Ms. Rabasa requested further clarification of policy language relating to charter schools.

IX. ADJORN

Vice Chair Di Liberto adjourned the work session at 7:32 p.m.



Colt Gill
District Clerk



Jenny Jonak
Board Chair

(Recorded by LCOG)
Approved on 02/05/2025