

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

Date: September 17, 2025

The Board of Directors (BOD) of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a work session at 6:00 p.m. via live-stream and broadcast on KRVM. Notice of the meeting was emailed to the media and posted on the 4J website on September 12, 2024.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tom Di Liberto
Ericka Thessen
Jenny Jonak
Judy Newman
Morgan Munro
Rick Hamilton

ABSENT:

Maya Rabasa

STAFF:

Miriam Mickelson, Superintendent
Carmen Xiomara Urbina, Chief of Staff
Matt Brown, Director of Finance
Bob Blythe, Associate Director of Financial Services
Christine Nesbit, General Counsel
Larry Williams, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
Judy Jesiah, State and Federal Grants Manager
Juan Carlos Cuadros, Assistant Superintendent of Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging
Kat Lange, Executive Director of Youth and Family Support
Oscar Loureiro, Director of Research and Planning
Kelly McIver, Communications Director
Kyle Tucker, Chief Operations Officer
Erin Gaston, Elementary Curriculum and MTSS Administrator
Brooke Wagner, Assistant Superintendent for Administrative Services
Cynthia Calletano, Executive Assistant to the Chief of Staff/Board
Lisa Fjordbeck, Operations Manager for the Superintendent's Office

OTHER GUESTS:

None.

EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATIONS:

Sabrina Gordon, Eugene Education Association (EEA)
Lisa Jenkins-Easton, Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA)
Joel Lavin, Managers, Administrators, Professionals, and Supervisors (MAPS)

MEDIA:

KRVM

I. CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER, ROLL CALL

Chair Di Liberto called the work session to order at 6:02 p.m.

II. BOARD CHAIR WELCOME

Chair Di Liberto reported that members of the Eugene School District 4J Board of Directors (BOD) attended the United Way Breakfast on September 11, 2025. He announced the following Committee assignments for the 2025-26 school year:

- All members to serve on Budget Committee
- Ms. Munro, Vice Chair Thessen, and Ms. Jonak to serve on Bond Oversight Long Range Facilities Planning Committee
- Vice Chair Thessen, Ms. Rabasa, and Rick Hamilton to serve on Legislative Committee
- Ms. Newman (Ms. Jonak alternate) to serve on Lane Council of Governments (LCOG)
- Mr. Hamilton (Ms. Jonak alternate) to serve on Lane ESD Budget Committee
- Ms. Newman to serve on Eugene Education Foundation (EEF)
- Ms. Rabasa, Ms. Munro, and Ms. Newman to serve on Superintendent's Policy Workgroup
- Chair Di Liberto (Ms. Jonak alternate) to serve on Charter School Council
- TBD to serve on Educational Equity Advisory Committee (EEAC)

III. AGENDA APPROVAL

There were no changes to the agenda.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were none.

Chair Di Liberto took a moment to explain protocol for public comment during work sessions, as follows:

- Up to 5 individuals will be permitted to provide public comment
- There is a 3-minute time limit (per speaker)
- If there are more than 5 individuals who wish to provide public comment, priority will be given to district residents who did not provide public comment during the previous two meetings, after which the selection of speakers will be determined randomly
- Comments at work sessions are asked to address topics listed on the published agenda

V. COMMENTS BY EMPLOYEE GROUPS

Joel Lavin, Managers, Administrators, Professionals, and Supervisors (MAPS) provided comments. He offered appreciation for the student-centered solutions on behalf of upper leadership and the superintendent. He said the budget outlook is sobering. He cited shrinking state school revenue. He said the large, proposed cuts to the general fund would result in reductions across all employee groups and asked the BOD to seek input from students, families, employee groups, and community partners. Mr. Lavin brought attention to the importance of Outdoor School, the Policy Workgroup, and the upcoming Budget Committee selection process.

VI. CONSENT GROUP – ITEMS FOR ACTION

1. APPROVE THE DRAFT BOARD MEETING MINUTES FOR: AUGUST 20, 2025 WORK SESSION

2. APPROVE ROUTINE PERSONNEL ACTIONS

3. FIFTH GRADE OUTDOOR SCHOOL CONTRACTS FOR COYOTE OUTDOOR SCHOOL AND CAMP TAMARACK

4. BOND PROJECT – SOUTH EUGENE HIGH SCHOOL WINDOW REPLACEMENT – DESIGN

MOTION: Mr. Hamilton moved to approve the consent agenda. Vice Chair Thessen seconded. **The motion passed unanimously, 6:0:0; Chair Di Liberto, Vice Chair Thessen, Ms. Jonak, Ms. Newman, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

VII. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

1. RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE SUPERINTENDENT’S POLICY WORK GROUP

Superintendent Mickelson referenced a document provided to the BOD with further details about the Superintendent’s Policy Workgroup. She noted that last year 40 policies were approved, a significant increase from previous years. The Superintendent’s Policy Workgroup met last week and will continue meeting every other week throughout the school year.

2. RECEIVE THE INTEGRATED GUIDANCE/PROGRAMS (IG) 2024-25 ANNUAL REPORT

Assistant Superintendent of Instruction Larry Williams and Manager of Financial Stewardship and Compliance (State and Federal Grants) Judy Jesiah responded to questions about the Integrated Guidance/Programs (IG) 2024-25 Annual Report. Mr. Williams referenced a document provided to the BOD with further details about the report – including that Student Investment Account (SIA, part of IG) recipients are required by statute to review their progress on an annual basis through an annual progress report and financial audit, present their annual report to their governing board, and post the report to the district or charter school website; and that the Instruction Cabinet shall provide a snapshot of IG outcomes and strategies and report budget and expenditures to the Oregon Department of Education (ODE).

Mr. Williams and Ms. Jesiah invited feedback from the BOD. The Annual Report will be submitted to ODE by September 30, 2025.

Ms. Munro asked how they are ensuring elementary school educators receive the support they need to transition into the new curriculum.

Mr. Williams responded that the Language Arts curriculum adoption is still fresh. He said there will be refresher trainings, and learning the curriculum will take time.

On the topic of attendance, Vice Chair Thessen is concerned about the effect of the new bell-to-bell cellphone ban; and in general, ensuring that the district is accurately tracking attendance.

Mr. Williams said the district relies on information provided when the student/parent calls in. He noted that it is more difficult tracking high school attendance. He said middle and elementary have made gains and improving high school attendance is their focus. He mentioned work being conducted on behalf of the Attendance Committee.

Ms. Munro asked about grant activities, specifically requesting information about the large range/difference in the data. She asked for more context around budgeting versus spent in the form of a Friday memo.

Chair Di Liberto asked for more information about mentoring new teachers.

Mr. Williams responded that mentoring new teachers is challenging as there are nine mentors and more than 100 new teachers. He said they also rely on the “neighboring teacher” across the hall to provide mentorship.

Ms. Newman asked if the early literacy fund is separate.

Ms. Jesiah responded affirmatively.

Ms. Jonak inquired about the percentage of students with the potential to graduate early.

Mr. Williams said 62% of juniors could reach the number of credits to graduate. He explained that while it is a great problem to have, their focus is for students to remain through their senior year. He cited sports, clubs, career paths, and college credits as potential incentives.

Eugene Education Association (EEA) Sabrina Gordon provided comments about the teacher mentor program. She said in light of budget restrictions, there will likely need to be adjustments in the future. She encouraged working together to meet the needs of educators entering the workforce.

3. RECEIVE MONTHLY FINANCE REPORT

Director of Financial Services Matt Brown provided a monthly finance report including enrollment trends, general fund revenue, general fund expenses, and a financial summary.

Mr. Brown said the district is largely following previous historical trends. Regarding the beginning fund balance for the general fund, he said the district is coming in less than was forecasted (1.3% difference). He noted that the low percentage difference is favorable.

Ms. Munro requested a column for monthly budgeting.

Mr. Brown responded affirmatively.

Mr. Brown informed the BOD that the district’s Finance Department recently received an email detailing allocations from ODE for Integrated Guidance, including reductions for the 2025-26 and 2026-27 school years. He said overall the district is down \$1.16 million. He noted that the legislation added \$100 million from their rainy-day fund over the next two years. Mr. Brown added that ODE contacted them and said they are paying the district for overdue timber revenue in the amount of roughly \$1.2 million. Given the new information, Mr. Brown said their goal is to avoid any disruptions to the current school year (i.e. no reductions or changes).

Ms. Newman asked for more information about the ADMw (weighted average).

Mr. Brown responded that ADMw includes, but is not limited to, poverty, teen pregnancy, special education, English Language Learners (ELL), remote elementary school corrections, small high school corrections, post-graduate scholars, and foster care. He said he will follow up with more information about ADMw.

In closing, Mr. Brown stated that their intention is to begin educating the community, staff, and public about the current and near future district budget scenario, including:

- Enrollment decline (-5%) and an increase (+32%) in staffing
- A spending down of 40% of the fund balance
- Ending fund balance decreasing
- To maintain an 8% reserve policy for 2026-27, \$24.9 million in reductions are needed; and reducing to meet the reserve policy does not fix the overarching financial issue, the district is still outpacing revenue

VIII. ITEMS FOR ACTION

1. NOMINATION FOR OREGON SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION (OSBA) LEGISLATIVE POLICY COMMITTEE POSITION

MOTION: Vice Chair Thessen moved to nominate Ms. Newman to serve on the OSBA Legislative Policy Committee. Ms. Munro seconded. **The motion passed unanimously, 6:0:0; Chair Di Liberto, Vice Chair Thessen, Ms. Jonak, Ms. Newman, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

2. NOMINATION FOR OREGON SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION (OSBA) BOARD DIRECTOR POSITION

MOTION: Ms. Jonak moved to nominate Ms. Rabasa to serve as OSBA Board Director. Seconded by Mr. Hamilton; **The motion passed unanimously, 6:0:0; Chair Di Liberto, Vice Chair Thessen, Ms. Jonak, Ms. Newman, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

3. APPROVE THE BUDGET COMMITTEE SELECTION PROCESS FOR 2025-26

Chair Di Liberto recommended approval of the Budget Committee selection process for 2025-26. Chair Di Liberto explained the process, including that there are two open Budget Committee vacancies. He noted that one member of the EEAC must fill a vacancy on the Budget Committee. The recommendation is that the EEAC nominate one of their members, thereby leaving only one position to fill through the district's selection process. The BOD will be asked to identify their top three finalists via ballot process.

The BOD engaged in a brief discussion about the ideal number of interview finalists.

MOTION: Ms. Jonak moved to change the number of interview finalists from three to six. Vice Chair Thessen seconded. **The motion passed unanimously, 6:0:0; Chair Di Liberto, Vice Chair Thessen, Ms. Jonak, Ms. Newman, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

MOTION: Ms. Newman moved to add the following additional question for candidates: "While not required, please share any experience you have with finance, accounting, or budgets." Ms. Munro seconded. **The motion passed unanimously, 6:0:0; Chair Di Liberto, Vice Chair Thessen, Ms. Jonak, Ms. Newman, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

MOTION: Ms. Jonak moved to approve the Budget Committee selection process. Mr. Hamilton seconded. **The motion passed unanimously, 6:0:0; Chair Di Liberto, Vice Chair Thessen, Ms. Jonak, Ms. Newman, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

4. APPROVE THE REVISED 2025-26 BOARD WORKING AGREEMENTS

Chair Di Liberto recommended approval of the Revised 2025-26 Board Working Agreements.

MOTION: Vice Chair Thessen moved to approve the Revised 2025-26 Board Working Agreements. Ms. Jonak seconded. **The motion passed unanimously, 6:0:0; Chair Di Liberto, Vice Chair Thessen, Ms. Jonak, Ms. Newman, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

IX. ITEMS FOR ACTION AT A FUTURE MEETING

1. REVIEW FOR APPROVAL OF THE 2025-26 BOARD GOALS

Vice Chair Thessen introduced review for approval of the 2025-26 Board Goals. She referenced a document provided to the BOD and said that action will be taken at the next meeting.

2. CONSIDER FOR APPROVAL OF THE 2025-26 SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION PROCESS

Chair Di Liberto provided information about the 2025-26 Superintendent Evaluation Process and outlined superintendent goals.

3. FOR CONSIDERATION, BOARD ELECTION FORMAT

Ms. Newman introduced the Board Election Format for consideration, specifically bringing attention to regional representation in the election process or ranked choice voting. She said the topic will be revisited in December or January.

X. ADJOURN

Vice Chair Thessen recognized Future Build for completing a new medical respite clinic located at Everyone Village.

Chair Di Liberto adjourned the work session at 7:50 p.m.

Recorded by Terah Van Dusen, LCOG



Dr. Miriam Mickelson
District Clerk



Tom Di Liberto
Board Chair