MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING

OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SCHOOL DISTRICT 4J, LANE COUNTY, OREGON

Date: December 3, 2025

The Board of Directors (BOD) of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a special meeting 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 November 28, 2025.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:
Tom Di Liberto
Ericka Thessen
Maya Rabasa
Jenny Jonak
Judy Newman
Morgan Munro
Rick Hamilton

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:
Dakota Boulette
Eric Richardson
Scott Fellman
Abbie Stillie
Courtney Salic
David Wallace
Amy Fellows

ABSENT:
None

STAFF:
Miriam Mickelson, Superintendent
Carmen Xiomara Urbina, Chief of Staff
Matt Brown, Director of Finance
Bob Blyth, Associate Director of Finance
Kelly McIver, Communications Director
Christine Nesbit, General Counsel
Cynthia Calletano, Executive Assistant to the Chief of Staff/Board
Lisa Fjordbeck, Operations Manager for the Superintendent's Office

OTHER GUESTS:
Krista Parent, Coalition of Oregon School Administrators (COSA) Executive Director
Candace Pelt-Perez, Coalition of Oregon School Administrators (COSA) Deputy Director

EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATIONS:
Jamie Meyers, Eugene Education Association (EEA) President
David Wines, Eugene Education Association (EEA) Vice President
Scott Mayers, Managers, Administrators, Professionals, and Supervisors (MAPS) President

MEDIA:
KRVM

I. CALL SPECIAL MEETING TO ORDER, ROLL CALL

Chair Di Liberto called the special meeting to order at 6:14 p.m.

II. BOARD CHAIR WELCOME

Chair Di Liberto welcomed attendees to the special meeting. He said the focus of the meeting will be training for the Board of Directors (BOD) and the Budget Committee regarding the budgetary process. He highlighted a Eugene School District 4J budget shortfall of $30 million.

Chair Di Liberto said that given the deficit, the district is likely resizing the workforce. He said the superintendent and staff have begun a full examination to generate a budget plan that reflects 4J values, policies, and resolutions. He introduced Coalition of Oregon School Administrators (COSA) Executive Director Krista Parent and COSA Deputy Director Candace Pelt-Perez to facilitate an informational session regarding the budget process.

III. INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS AND SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Mickelson provided comments. She expressed appreciation for Budget Committee members and acknowledged the scope of current budgetary challenges. She thanked COSA guests for helping to facilitate the training.

IV. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

1. SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET PROCESS

Ms. Parent and Ms. Pelt-Perez provided an informative presentation about budget processes, specifically focusing on Budget Committee Roles and Responsibilities.

Ms. Parent provided opening comments about school budgeting, including that it is "one part science, and one part educated guesses, seasoned with unforeseen circumstances and a pinch of hopeful thinking baked under a constant heat of state and federal requirements."

She noted that school boards will not know for certain until the end of the 2027 fiscal year how much they have to spend in the 2026-27 school year budget, which must be approved by June 30, 2026.

She outlined the following:

- The State School Fund allocation $11.4 billion adopted in the 2025-27 state budget gave school budget officials a biennial number that gets split 49% in the first year and 51% in the second year but no guarantee
- Board Policy DI "Financial Management Policies" gives the Board and staff further guidance regarding the budget

She introduced three major steps in the budget process:

- District staff proposed budget
- Budget Committee approved budget
- School Board adopted budget

Ms. Pelt-Perez briefly went over Board Policy DBEA:

- Made up of 14 members
- A majority of the committee is required for passing an action item
- At the first "official" Budget Committee meeting, a Chair and Vice Chair shall be selected from the community appointed members
- ORS 294.414 is state law regarding Budget Committees

She outlined the Roles and Responsibilities of the Budget Committee:

- The district's Budget Committee shall hold one or more meetings to receive the budget message, the budget document and to provide members of the public with an opportunity to ask questions about and comment on the budget document
- All meetings are open to the public
- It is the function of the Budget Committee to approve appropriations for expenditures before the start of each new fiscal year as presented by the Budget Officer to the committee
- The Budget Committee may choose to change appropriation levels; however it does not have authority to make programmatic changes
- Once the Budget Committee approves the budget it is sent to the Board for final adoption after a public hearing

Dakota Boulette asked if the Budget Committee not having authority to make programmatic changes is written in statute.

Ms. Parent confirmed that statutorily the Budget Committee does not have the authority to make programmatic changes, but it does have the authority to make appropriation level changes. She said the Budget Committee can also make recommendations to the BOD.

Ms. Parent and Ms. Pelt-Perez outlined key dates leading to the proposed budget:
**Budget Committee members are encouraged to attend or review the following meetings*

- November 5 – Board resolution and values, priorities
- December 10 – Phase I
- January 7 – Phase 2 (First Read)
- January 14 – Phase 2 (Second Read)
- January 21 – Phase 3 (First Read)
- February 4 – Phase 3 (Second Read)

Superintendent Mickelson explained that the goal behind the phased approach is to protect direct services to students, such that any reductions to classroom-based personnel will occur in Phase 3. She said that Phase 1 is non-personnel reductions, Phase 2 is budget reductions impacting personnel (specifically MAPS), programmatic changes and/or school closures, and Phase 3 involves classified and licensed staff.

Ms. Parent observed that it is likely impossible to achieve a $30 million reduction without getting to Phase 3.

Ms. Parent presented 4J's Core Values: Student Centered, Equity, Academic Excellence, Inclusion and Wellness, Responsibility and Sustainability, Transparency and Trust.

She briefly introduced Budget Priorities: Protect What is Essential, Center Students, Advance Equity and Access, Ensure Fiscal Stability, Promote Focus, Efficiency, Alignment and Coherence, and Lead with Care and Clarity.

Ms. Parent outlined best practices for the Budget Committee process:
**Budget Committee members are encouraged to review information about the State School Fund on the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) website*

- ✓ Training on the Budget Committee process, calendar, expectations for committee members, etc.
- ✓ Overview of how the State School Fund (SSF) works and how Oregon funds its schools
- ✓ Orientation on the budget document, the fund structure, and the types of activities or programs and expenditures made from each fund in the budget
- ✓ General discussion of vision and goals, spending priorities, or philosophy used to develop the proposed budget
- ✓ Assumptions used in the development of the budget (SSF estimates, enrollment, federal allocations, etc.)
- ✓ General economic projections by the finance officer of possible changes in resources or requirements expected next year

Ms. Pelt-Perez outlined best practices for Budget Committee work:

- The primary function is to receive and review the Superintendent's proposed budget and budget message, then make a formal recommendation to the Board about whether to adopt it, adopt it with modifications, or reject it
- The Committee also:
    - Tests the budget against the district's goals and core values
    - Approve the district's spending authority
    - Certifies property tax amount submitted to County Assessor
    - Ensures the budget is balanced
    - Provides opportunity for public input
    - Can provide priority input if there is opportunity to return programs

The following are things the Budget Committee does *not* do:

- Make the final budget decisions
- Determine specific program cuts
- Manage day-to-day spending
- Set educational policy
- Negotiate labor contracts
- Have ongoing oversight authority
- Approve budget transfers or changes

Ms. Parent and Ms. Pelt-Perez invited questions and comments.

Mr. Richardson asked for clarification about the difference between department appropriation levels and programs, specifically related to athletics.

Associate Finance Director Bob Blyth explained that athletics is one program within a function, so the Budget Committee would approve the appropriation at the function level for all the programs associated with that function.

Ms. Stillie asked why the Budget Committee does not have access to the entire budget, including all the line items.

Mr. Brown responded with further context about their reasonings.

On the topic of the SSF, Mr. Blyth mentioned that 4J receives roughly 2.7%, so if the SSF were to reduce by $100 million, it would be an impact of $2.7 million.

Ms. Fellows recommended that the Legislative Committee provide information on the topic of SSF funding to the Budget Committee. She also requested information from the Finance Department regarding the SPED budget.

Superintendent Mickelson committed to emailing ThoughtExchange data to Budget Committee members.

Mr. Brown mentioned that Budget Committee members can expect an email from Operations Manager for the Superintendent's Office Lisa Fjordbeck with links to tools, guides, and webinars referenced or requested during the discussion.

Ms. Salic suggested that Budget Committee members continue receiving paper copies of the presentations prior to their meetings.

Mr. Brown responded affirmatively.

Mr. Brown, Mr. Blyth, and Superintendent Mickelson presented information pertaining to the budget decision-making guide for the 2026-27 school year; and the Budget Roadshow (*4J.lane.edu/budget*).

Mr. Brown presented the budget values and priorities statement and budget priorities.

Superintendent Mickelson provided the following key budget reduction questions:

- What must we protect or preserve? Why?
- What can we preserve but scale back? Why?
- What can we pause until financial conditions improve? Why?
- What can we de-implement (acknowledging we cannot fund everything? Why?)
- What are the trade-offs? Why?

She suggested the following criteria to guide in answering the questions:

- Alignment
- Student Impact
- Equity and Access
- Sustainability
- Focus and Efficiency
- Community Voice
- CBA/Legal/Fairness

Mr. Brown briefly outlined Resolution No. 2025-26-05, adopted on November 5, 2025.

Staff presented information from the Budget Roadshow, including:

- Budget Buckets
    - 100 – General Fund (53%)
    - 200 – Special Purpose (11%) **18.6 million from federal government*
    - 300 – Debt Service (9%)
    - 400 – Capital Projects (17%)
    - 600 – Insurance Reserves (9%)
    - 700 – Private Trust (<1%)
- State School Fund
    - State School Fund Formula

        - Currently provides $118 million – 47% of general fund revenue
    - Local Option Revenue
      **Renews every 5 years*
        - Currently provides $27 million – 11% of general fund revenue
- Enrollment and Staffing Trends
    - Enrollment is down 20% since 2000
    - Staff has increased 25% since 2000
- Forecasting the Future
    - Financial Forecast as of September 2025 – expenditures are exceeding revenue
    - Assumed reductions: $30 million in 2026/27 and $8 million in 2027/28
    - Federal ESSER dollars with significant hiring
    - Employee costs, such as COLA, retirement and insurance costs
    - Enrollment decline (low birth rates, housing costs, smaller families)
    - Legislation in Salem (SSF allocations, unfunded mandates)
- Looking at our Past
    - The last significant reductions were over a decade ago
    - $20.7 million in reductions were made during the 2024-25 school year
- Current Year Changes
    - Moving to a hybrid-centralized purchasing process
    - Purchasing card reductions
    - Reducing professional development
    - Hiring process reviews for all positions
    - No new programs or services
    - Not currently looking at mid-year staffing reductions to preserve current service and current programs to students

Superintendent Mickelson provided next steps/timeline:

- October – November: Engagement
- December – February: Recommendations
    - 3 Phases
        - Phase 1: Executive Leaders
        - Phase 2: Directors, principals, managers, and professionals and program changes
            - Board meetings January 7 and 14
        - Phase 3: Licensed and classified staff
            - Board meetings January 21 and February 4
- February – March: Building
    - Staffing and contractual obligations, Budget Building for 2026-27
- March – June: Adoption

- Budget Committee Meetings – March 31, April 8 and 22 at 6:00 p.m.
- Board Meeting – Public Hearing May 13
- Board Meeting – Board Adopts Budget May 27

Staff briefly responded to questions from the BOD and Budget Committee members.

V. ADJOURN

Chair Di Liberto adjourned the special meeting at 8:19 p.m.

Miriam Mickelson, Superintendent

Tom Di Liberto, Chair

Recorded by Terah Van Dusen, LCOG