

¹MINUTES OF THE BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
EUGENE SCHOOL DISTRICT 4J, LANE COUNTY, OREGON

Date: April 22, 2025

The Budget Committee of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a regular Budget Committee meeting at 5:30 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.

ROLL CALL

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Eric Richardson
David Wallace
Courtney Salic
Scott Fellman
Abbie Stillie (online)
Amy Fellows (online)

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Dakota Boulette

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Maya Rabasa
Jenny Jonak
Morgan Munro
Judy Newman
Tom Di Liberto
Rick Hamilton
Erika Thessen

STAFF:

Colt Gill, Interim Superintendent
Carmen Xiomara Urbina, Chief of Staff
Matt Brown, Director of Financial Services
Bob Blyth, Associate Director of Financial Services
John Goldberg, Financial Supervisor of Operations and Accounts Payable
Larry Williams, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
Kat Lange, Executive Director of Youth and Family Support

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Approved on: April 8, 2026

Kyle Tucker, Chief Operations Officer
Brooke Wagner, Assistant Superintendent for Administrative Services
Lisa Fjordbeck, Operations Coordinator for the Superintendent's Office
Kelly McIver, Communications Director
Jill Cuadros, Director of Nutrition Services
Juan Carlos Cuadros, Assistant Superintendent of Equity and Belonging

EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATIONS:

Dave Wines, Eugene Education Association (EEA)
Lisa Jenkins-Easton, Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA)

MEDIA:

KRVM

I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Vice Chair Eric Richardson called the Eugene School District 4J Budget Committee meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. He said the names of all members present.

II. REVIEW PREVIOUS MEETING REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION AND QUESTIONS

There were no comments.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Hilary Lindsey, 4J parent and educator, advocated for fewer proposed budget cuts to teacher FTE, citing the likelihood of increased class sizes in district elementary schools. She said larger classes without Educational Assistants (EAs) will exacerbate challenges and may be catastrophic for the wellbeing of students and teachers. She added that she is sad to lose her position teaching the first grade at Edgewood Elementary School. She urged greater cuts to non-school based administrative positions.

Megan Murphy, 4J educator and swim coach, voiced opposition to cutting adaptive physical education (PE) specialists. She shared a personal story about an adaptive PE specialist providing support to a visually impaired athlete/swimmer throughout elementary, middle, and high school. She said without the support, the district will lessen the opportunities for students with disabilities to have the skills and confidence to participate in sports at the high school level and will impact the efforts of access and inclusion. She urged the Committee to reconsider cutting funding for adaptive PE specialists.

Valerie Blood, 4J parent and volunteer, spoke in opposition to proposed budget cuts. She asked the district to justify the cost of the incoming superintendent, the salary ranges of the executive leadership teams, and the assistant superintendent, chief of staff, and chief of operations positions. She questioned how the district can provide an education for all of its students given the proposed budget cuts.

Kerry Tedesco, 4J parent, voiced opposition to proposed budget cuts. She articulated parallels between budgetary decisions she witnessed in the health care setting and the school district, stating that administrative positions are outpacing ground staff positions at an increasing rate; and it falls to the people on the ground to carry the burden of cost savings. Ms. Tedesco suggested that assistant superintendent level administrators take a 10% pay cut in solidarity.

Charlotte Shuffield, 4J elementary school student, provided comments about proposed budget cuts. She said there should be more than one behavior support specialist at her school because kids need more help than one person can do in her classroom. She described meltdowns, throwing things, and inappropriate language. She reported that students have a hard time learning and concentrating. Ms. Shuffield said kids are feeling unsafe and unable to learn in their classrooms. She suggested budget cuts at the administrative level.

Melissa Nixon, 4J educator, spoke in opposition to proposed budget cuts and in support of retaining essential staff working directly with students. She explained that before the 2024-25 school year, challenges in district elementary schools stemmed from being significantly understaffed, particularly concerning classified positions. This year, the district has finally seen improvements thanks to support staff. Ms. Nixon urged the Committee to support district students by supporting staff.

Krystal Elms, 4J parent and volunteer, voiced opposition to proposed budget cuts. She urged prioritizing preserving resources closest to the students. She proposed that staff not spending at least one day per month on campus be considered for budget re-evaluation. She called attention to examining compensation for assistant superintendents and pausing infrastructure projects. She urged the Committee to reconsider the proposed budget cuts.

Bobbie Willis, 4J educator, spoke in opposition to proposed budget cuts. She reported that employees are struggling after learning about proposed budget cuts. She stated that accessing the information regarding proposed budget cuts is a challenge. Ms. Willis offered suggestions and requested that the Committee reconsider the scope and ramification of the proposed budget cuts.

Kristin Denmark, 4J parent, voiced opposition to proposed budget cuts. Her primary concerns are increased class sizes beyond appropriate levels and a reduction in support staff, including elementary school librarians and nutrition staff. She implored the Committee to find alternative ways to reduce costs and lessen the severity of cuts impacting the district's youngest student population. She stated that the level of cuts are too significant and should be offset with other cuts. Ms. Denmark urged the Committee to reinstate the librarian program in full and consider expanding it.

IV. COMMENTS FROM EMPLOYEE GROUPS

Dave Wines, Eugene Education Association (EEA) Vice President, raised concerns about the financial narrative driving proposed budget reductions, specifically the assumption that the district must spend \$30 million in reserves and that deep cuts to student facing positions are inevitable. He suggested that the district has historically incorrectly forecasted drastic reductions in the ending fund balance. Mr. Wines provided information via PowerPoint presentation, including a series of bar graphs depicting 4J ending fund balances. He pointed out a pattern of errors in the predictions of ending fund balances. He said that every year there is a projection of financial hardship, yet the reserve grows instead. He suggested that it is a systemic issue having to do with how the district models the budget. Mr. Wines challenged the district's narrative that there are balanced budget cuts between work groups. He described district positions potentially being affected by the proposed budget cuts. He urged the Committee to take a deeper look at the model being used to justify the proposed budget reductions.

Lisa Jenkins-Easton, Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) President, read aloud the letter about proposed budget reductions received by classified employees. She reported that 29 classified staff are being reduced and 53 fully displaced in the proposed budget cuts. She requested information about how much of each dollar is spent on which employee group and the total dollar amount of vacancy savings for unfilled positions. She brought attention to specific schools and programs which would be negatively affected by the proposed budget reductions. Ms. Jenkins-Easton is seeking clarity after reportedly being told that the vote to increase reserves would not impact the amount needed for classified negotiations. She provided the Committee with a handout including data relevant to the proposed budget reductions.

V. BUDGET PRESENTATION

Interim Superintendent Colt Gill and Finance Director Matt Brown provided a presentation of the 2024-25 Proposed Budget via PowerPoint presentation with links to additional information and source data.

Interim Superintendent Gill presented a table detailing district leadership structures at comparable districts throughout the state of Oregon.

Interim Superintendent Gill presented tables detailing staffing by group, staffing costs by group, and beginning fund balances and descriptions.

Interim Superintendent Gill presented a bar graph of the general fund beginning fund balances, highlighting that the anticipated fund balance reflects that the district expects to spend \$29 million more than it receives this year.

Mr. Brown presented a line graph of the beginning fund balances, bringing attention to the growth over time and acknowledging historical projections. He said errors in historical projections have improved significantly in the past three years.

Mr. Brown outlined the following forecast assumptions:

- PERS +24% increase in PERS cost
- Enrollment -1.78% decrease each year
- State School Fund +8.98% assumption (2025-2027)
- State School Fund +4.00% assumption (2027-2029)
- Employee COLA
- Reserve Policy 8%
- Transfers Out

Interim Superintendent Gill explained that the role of the Committee is to approve the property tax rate and the 2025-26 budget by giving direction on the overall level of reductions and the Budget Values Framework. He acknowledged the public comments received about specific reductions within the district, stating that reductions are painful. He said the district has a responsibility to name when the district is headed toward funding cliffs. He explained that federal COVID relief dollars exited the district in September 2024, further complicated by record low enrollment and record high staffing. He recognized that district students have incredible needs. He added that by reducing in targeted areas the district is trying to preserve nearly \$300 million in spending that supports student learning and services.

Interim Superintendent Gill introduced three options for the level of reductions:

1. Make virtually no reductions to operate at the same level of services next school year (expending nearly all reserves)
2. The proposed budget puts the district in place to make adjustments (\$10-25 million) next year and perhaps for the following biennium
3. Deeper reductions (\$5-25 million more) this year and reduce the need for reductions in future years

Mr. Brown provided information about increases to the general fund reflecting a total of \$4,923,000.

He provided information about level 1 reductions to the general fund reflecting a total of \$9,965,700.

He provided information about level 2 reductions to the general fund reflecting a total of \$5,080,000.

He provided information about level 3 reductions to the general fund reflecting a total of \$6,025,000.

He provided information about level 4 reductions to the general fund reflecting a total of \$2,925,000.

He provided information about level 5 reductions (optional) to the general fund reflecting a total of \$7,500,000.

He provided additional information about general fund reductions reflecting a total of \$23,995.700

Mr. Brown presented three pie charts depicting general fund revenues, general fund expenditures (excluding reserves), and general fund expenditures (with reserves).

He presented three bar graphs depicting a general fund forecast with no reductions (status quo), a general fund forecast for the proposed budget, and a general fund forecast for the proposed budget plus \$10 million in reductions.

Mr. Brown invited questions from the Committee, prompting deep discussion about the proposed options for the level of reductions.

Interim Superintendent Gill spoke about proposed level 1 reductions, specifically affecting 19 elementary level educators. He explained that the district has not adjusted staffing to account for the decline in enrollment for several years. If adopted, they project that class sizes would range from 13 to 28 students per class. The average class size for Kindergarten would be roughly 19 students.

Mr. Fellman asked how the school choice policy affects adjusting class size to staff.

Interim Superintendent Gill responded that it has an impact. He provided one example, and said the solution is moving staff where they are needed and/or hiring additional staff.

Mr. Fellman said they might consider changes to the school choice program to help address the budget shortfall and minimize cuts.

Interim Superintendent Gill agreed. He suggested that it be considered in future years as it would be difficult to accomplish in one budget season.

Ms. Rabasa asked for further clarification about level 1 reductions, specifically cuts affecting all student-facing positions.

Interim Superintendent Gill provided further clarification.

Ms. Thessen asked for more information about level 3 reductions, specifically cuts to nutrition services.

Mr. Brown responded that it reflects one MAPS employee reduction and a minor change in service levels.

Ms. Munro asked for more information about level 2 and 3 reductions, specifically instruction (staff reduction and contracts).

Interim Superintendent Gill responded that level 2 reductions reflect cuts to Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSA) and level 3 reductions reflect additional cuts to TOSA and instructional technology positions.

Ms. Thessen and Ms. Rabasa requested data about the history of TOSA positions.

Mr. Brown said he would follow up with more information if available.

Ms. Munro brought up Mentor Teachers.

Interim Superintendent Gill responded that the proposed TOSA reductions are at the central district level and do not include instructional coaches and coordinators at the elementary level. He said the proposed reductions impact Student Success Coordinators at the high school level. He referenced a one-page document detailing mentor programs.

Ms. Thessen observed that some of the schools with the highest cuts seem to be the most vulnerable.

Vice Chair Richardson asked for more information about level 5 reductions, specifically the facilities - reduction to 2024-25 transfer.

Mr. Brown responded that it is a one-time reduction in the transfer in the current year's budget. For level 4 and under reductions, they are proposing a facilities reduction to impact future years.

Ms. Newman asked for more information about level 5 reductions, specifically closure of an elementary school.

Interim Superintendent Gill confirmed that consolidating or closing an elementary school is an option.

Ms. Munro asked about the impacts of proposed reductions to the maintenance department.

Mr. Tucker responded that there is current bond money dedicated for deferred maintenance, but costs have risen significantly (over 40%). He added that one of the purposes of the capital reserve fund is not only the facilities component, but it is an operational reserve (nutrition, technology, and transportation). He said the impacts would be alarming to a district this size.

Ms. Rabasa asked what the current percentage level of reserves is.

Mr. Brown responded that he would follow up with the information.

Ms. Rabasa asked if levels 1 through 5 could be annotated further for better comprehension throughout the Committee. She also questioned if notifications were sent to staff across all levels.

Interim Superintendent Gill responded that all individuals whose positions may be reduced (other than the potential school closure outlined in level 5) were notified.

Ms. Jonak commented that she found the community and staff input compelling. She said the district has high needs right now and that dollars should be spent on kids today. She advocated for reductions far from the classroom. She suggested receiving input from employee groups about where they see the greatest efficiencies.

Ms. Thessen said she understands the need to adjust class sizes to be in line with enrollment. She suggested limiting the cuts to support services.

Ms. Newman brought up the importance of maintaining reasonable class sizes.

Ms. Newman and Mr. Di Liberto requested information about the mechanisms leading to the finance department making better projections now versus previously.

Mr. Hamilton commented that when there are obligations that need to be paid it is better to pay now than later. He said that no one wants to make cuts but they need to do something.

Ms. Thessen asked for guidance from Interim Superintendent Gill regarding the clarification he is seeking from the Committee.

Interim Superintendent Gill said he would like to know what the Committee wants to target as a level of reduction, and direction around the proposed \$5 million.

Ms. Munro acknowledged that education is perennially underfunded. She said if the district does not make meaningful cuts, they are going to be much worse next year.

Mr. Fellman said he is leaning toward level 4 plus the facilities line item from level 5. He said there is an obligation to do it today to protect our schools for tomorrow.

Vice Chair Richardson said he is leaning toward level 3 but would consider incorporating the facilities line item from level 5.

Ms. Newman said she aligns with the proposed level with an emphasis on not altering current class size ratios.

Ms. Rabasa said she prefers level 1 along with adding facilities from levels 2 and 3 and would consider the school closure outlined in level 5 in the future.

Ms. Salic prefers aspects from level 3 but believes support staff should be restored.

Mr. Wallace prefers level 4. He questioned moving the program from Lane ESD in-house. He recommended using the savings and not reducing classified staff.

Ms. Munro said she aligns with level 4.

Ms. Stillie said her preference aligns with Ms. Jonak's proposal.

Ms. Fellows said her preference also aligns with Ms. Jonak's recommendation.

Mr. Di Liberto said his preference also aligns with Ms. Jonak's recommendation.

In closing, Interim Superintendent Gill said staff will do their best to provide a projection of each proposal at the next Budget Committee meeting.

VI. ITEMS RAISED BY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

1. NEXT MEETING

The next Budget Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 29, 2025.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Richardson adjourned the meeting at 9:15 p.m.