

**GRESHAM-BARLOW SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 10 JT.**  
**Minutes of Regular Board Strategic Planning Meeting**

**Friday, February 20, 2026**

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The Gresham-Barlow School District Board of Directors met in regular session on Friday, February 20, 2026 in the Media Center/Library at West Orient Middle School, 29805 SE Orient Drive, Gresham, OR. A Zoom link was provided for virtual meeting attendance.

**Board Members present:**

Heather Coleman-Cox, Shawn Farrens, Kris Howatt, Blake Petersen, Brenna Puderbaugh, Holly Riegelmann.

**Cabinet Members present:**

Dr. Tracy Klinger, Superintendent  
John Koch, Deputy Superintendent  
Dr. Sara Deboy, Assistant Superintendent

**Opening Items**

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**1. Facility Tours (7:45 - 11:45 a.m.) (12:30 p.m.)**

Prior to the start of the meeting, board members toured Gresham High School, Hall Elementary School, and West Orient Middle School. During these tours they viewed specialized programs, newly constructed areas compared to older areas, and how space is used in the buildings. No board business was discussed at this time.

**2. Board Lunch (11:45 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.) (12:30 p.m.)**

Prior to the start of the meeting, board members were served lunch. No board business was discussed at this time.

**3. Call to Order (12:30 p.m.) (12:30 p.m.)**

The meeting was called to order at 12:30 p.m. by the board chair, Blake Petersen.

**4. Roll Call (12:30 p.m.) (12:30 p.m.)**

All members of the board were in attendance at the meeting. Position 7 of the board is currently vacant.

**5. Approve Meeting Agenda (12:30 p.m.) (12:31 p.m.)**

Chair Petersen noted that they will need to move the board vacancy agenda item to the end of the meeting. They identified 4 finalists on February 5th, and interviewed 3 of the finalists on February 12<sup>th</sup>. They will interview the 4th finalist today.

**MOTION 63:** Move to approve the meeting agenda with the board vacancy debrief moved to 4:30 p.m. as stated. This motion, made by Holly Riegelmann and seconded by Shawn Farrens, Carried.

Aye: Heather Coleman-Cox, Shawn Farrens, Kris Howatt, Blake Petersen, Brenna Puderbaugh, Holly Riegelmann

Aye: 6, No: 0

**Discussion Items**

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**6. Board Vacancy Interview Debrief (12:30 - 1:00 p.m.) (4:32 p.m.)**

This item was moved to the end of the agenda at 4:30 p.m. (see motion 63 above).

At the start of the interview Chair Petersen shared the process with the candidate, and noted that they intend to work to an appointment by March 5th. The candidate was asked 6 questions and given 20 minutes for responses. If they had additional time left after answering the questions, they were asked if they wanted to clarify or add to any of their responses, and if they had any questions for the board. The interview questions were as follows:

- Question 1: Tell us about yourself, your connection to this community, and why you are best qualified to serve Gresham-Barlow students and families.
- Question 2: What builds transparency between a school board and the community?
- Question 3: Tell us about a time you dealt with conflict. How did you handle it, and how do you work through differences to get to more common ground?
- Question 4: How do you prioritize needs in a resource-constrained environment, and what is the role of the Board in establishing and evaluating those priorities?
- Question 5: How have you built trust and worked effectively across differences, and ensured underrepresented voices are heard in decision-making? How would that inform your service on this board?
- Question 6: What are the priorities for ensuring every student is prepared for post-graduation success, and how can the board apply a lens of educational equity to meet those goals without compromising our high academic standards?

#### Question 1 Response

Mr. Sedda shared that he is a Black man and multilingual immigrant. In his life he has had experiences that mirror many students. He left Kenya after the assassination of his uncle through forced displacement resulting in loss and resiliency. He moved intentionally to Gresham in 2013 for its cultural diversity, and his daughter is a first generation American. He was one of founding members of the Black Student Union Family Connection and he also joined the District Equity Committee. In 2023 he joined the Budget Committee and also attends regular district Key Communicator meetings. Last year he was selected to join the State of Oregon's Department of Education Refugee and Immigrant Student Success Advocacy Group where he was appointed as chair. They just completed a grant process allocating \$4 million to agencies serving immigrants and refugees. He is also a frequent volunteer at his child's school. Highland has all newcomers attend the school, and he knows what it is like to learn a second language, and have families ripped apart by social unrest. His life allows him to understand many of the challenges that students face, and as someone who reflects more than half of students in the community he is prepared to serve.

#### Question 2 Response

Mr. Sedda noted that transparency is built through consistent communication, authentic representation, and visible accountability. Families must feel not only informed, but need to be genuinely heard. This means having accessible meetings with language and format, and clearly sharing how decisions are made. As someone who lives and actively participates in the community, he understands that trust is strongest with the everyday community. He feels trust is strongest when leadership is present in the everyday community, not just board meetings. Transparency requires relationships and the courage to listen. When families see board members showing up to local events and engaging in activities, transparency becomes trust and trust builds partnership. They have to center students' well-being in every decision. This is how they build confidence in schools and share successes with every child.

#### Question 3 Response

In his role at Highland, Mr. Sedda helped navigate a conflict among families in the Black Student Union who held deeply different hopes for the space. Some viewed it as a place for community connection, belonging, and mutual support for students. Others felt they needed to push more on the advocacy front to affect policies. Emotions were high, and both sides came from a place of protecting and uplifting Black students. He approached the situation by creating a space to

listen, ensuring each group felt heard, and defining the shared purpose. He acknowledged that the two sides were not competing, but had complementary goals. They moved the conversation from “either/or” toward “both/and.” He held space for connection and also identified pathways for student voice and advocacy. Effective leadership requires emotional steadiness, humility, and commitment for shared values which he would bring to the board.

#### Question 4 Response

Mr. Sedda noted that in a resource constrained environment, prioritizing needs must focus on student well-being and long-term stability for the district. Decisions should be made from transparent data and community input. Scarcity requires discipline and moral clarity about what happens most. He understands how deeply funding decisions affect students. Prioritization should focus on classroom learning, mental health, and conditions allowing teachers to work well. When communities can clearly see how resources are selected, trust in the system grows. The role of the board is not to manage day to day operations, but to establish strategic priorities, adopt budgets aligned to those priorities, and be willing to adjust when something isn't serving students well. Using funds in ways that are fiscally responsible and focused on equity and student success.

#### Question 5 Response

Mr. Sedda has built trust across differences by leading with presence, humility, and consistent action. He focuses on listening, and seeking to understand people’s lived experiences and concerns before offering solutions. His lived experience as a Black immigrant, multilingual learner, parent, and engaged community member is not only part of his story, but a strength that helps him build relationships and make decisions. He has worked to make sure underrepresented voices are engaged in linguistically and culturally responsive ways. This commitment would guide his approach to governance, elevate community voice, and help ensure decisions reflect needs and strengths of all students and families. His goal is to build a school system where every family knows they belong, their voice matters and their children are valued.

#### Question 6 Response

Ensuring every student is prepared begins with guaranteeing strong academic foundations, high quality instruction, and rigorous coursework, comprehensive mental health and counseling services. They must reflect multiple pathways with college, career, and community leadership. Recognizing that students don't start with the same access to opportunity, equity is about removing barriers so opportunities are available to all students. The role of the board is to set a clear vision that pairs excellence with equity, adopting policies, budgets and accountability systems. It is their responsibility to build a system where a child’s future isn't predicted by race, language, or income, but instead shaped by community and belief in their success.

Following the interview, Chair Petersen asked if Mr. Sedda had any additional questions for the board. He confirmed when they planned to select a person to serve, and asked how long the term was. Chair Petersen shared that this board position would come back for election in May of 2027 for a 4-year term.

#### **Recess / Reconvene**

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##### **Board Recess (4:53 p.m.)**

The meeting was recessed at 4:53 p.m. while the candidate exited, and reconvened at 4:56 p.m.

Chair Petersen provided instructions to the board on how to rank the final candidate against the other finalists. Board members received their screening paperwork used during the previous interviews. He noted that they would recess the meeting for 5 minutes while they individually completed their scoring.

#### **Recess / Reconvene**

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### **Board Recess (4:53 p.m.)**

The meeting was recessed at 4:57 p.m. and reconvened at 5:07 p.m.

The board secretary shared the candidate scores and rankings. Chair Petersen asked the board to hone in on the top two candidates (Candidates B and D), specifically the strengths for the candidates. They discussed Candidate B's strengths including having an understanding of the community being served, being involved in different committees for the district, and their abilities to problem solving and understand how to address different points of view and work towards a common goal. When asked if they had any concerns around conflict of interest for Candidate B, board members didn't share any. Board members noted that it was disclosed in the candidate's application letter that this person has a familial relationship with a staff member. It was noted that there have been board members with spouses who are staff members in the past. They added that this candidate has an alternate point of view to theirs which would be a benefit and critical part of the conversation.

The board discussed the strengths of candidate D. They noted when looking at what this community could need, this person has serious depth of professional knowledge for conversations about a levy and strategic planning. Board members added that what the board needs is a sampling of all 12 candidates that applied. This candidate specifically mentioned and asked about a strategic plan. They have worked in Gresham for many years and have a pulse of the city. They have worked in a lot of capacities and are familiar with planning and outreach. Other board members expressed surprise that this candidate scored highly noting that this was not one of their top candidates. Board members noted that either of these candidates could be good for the board. They both bring value to the table.

Chair Petersen noted that at their March 5, 2026 Business Meeting they will have an agenda item to appointment a new board member. The proposed motion would include wording "should that person accept the appointment." The board will not have conversation about the appointment outside of the meeting. From the collective scoring, Candidate B was ranked highest with Candidate D ranked second.

### **Board Strategic Planning**

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#### **7. Board Self-Assessment (1:00 - 2:30 p.m.) (12:32 p.m.)**

Superintendent Klinger led the board through a self-reflection activity. They had planned to do this at their August Strategic Planning meeting but ran out of time. The activity will help prepare everyone for budget season and give them a chance to think about areas as team where they have strengths, and commitments they want to make as they head into spring with challenges ahead. As part of the reflection they reviewed how groups form, especially new groups, and the different stages of group development. They are facing challenges that might push them back into storming. The goal is to continue to be in the norming and forming stages, and be aware of challenges that might push them toward storming and to name it if it is happening.

Superintendent Klinger reviewed the benefits of shared goals. They want to make sure they understand their shared priorities and that they are aligned in the work they are doing. This takes mutual trust and accountability. Having coherence in how they approach things helps improve outcomes. They have talked about communication with stakeholders and working on transparency as part of the budget process, and they are working to be reflective and maintain a growth mindset.

Districts across the state are facing a wide variety of challenges. Superintendent Klinger asked the board to take two minutes to jot down some of the challenges the district is facing this spring. Responses included the following:

- Political unrest and a feeling of distrust of government (including board member)
- Emphasis that education will solve all the problems

- Unknown funding from the federal and state levels meaning they have to make cuts
- How and where will cuts take place and how will they affect students
- Negotiations this year for OSEA and next year for GBEA
- Increase in student absenteeism
- Increase of ICE presence and activity
- District enrollment, it generally drops in the spring which affects the budget and staffing
- Community transparency when making budget cuts; transparency with the community and mutual understanding of the cuts, and the impact it has on students
- Budget shortfall and supporting staff and families through the reductions and into the next biennium
- From an instructional standpoint spring is a very stressful because testing and content gets the most difficult
- Concerns about graduation
- Struggle for vision and clarity; struggle to balance programs important to the community and balance internal pressures so they don't combust internally.

Superintendent Klinger reviewed the likely challenges list which included many of the topics the board brainstormed. She noted that working as a team isn't a luxury. There are going to be pressures and it will be a test of their trust and relationships. The district has to have a budget that is sustainable, and to do that they have difficult choices ahead. Everything on the list to prioritize is good, and they are having to pick between good things. As a board and superintendent one of the primary responsibilities is to make sense of things, and be sense-makers for the community. They have to think ahead and understand the choices and process to put people at ease in the work they are doing and what it looks like. They have to continue building information and keep it accessible. She asked the board to take a moment and think about what they can learn from the past. It is likely that public comment at board meetings will increase, and the board should plan for that and be mentally prepared. They will get an increase in emails, workplace visits, and phone calls. They can also expect some individual advocacy from people who are really invested in saving their program. They will have to be aware of that and not make promises.

Superintendent Klinger asked the board what are some things they want to be aware of. Board members noted there will be a big emotional impact, and they will probably see more students coming to the board to share their stories which adds to the emotional impact. It is their job to be an advocate of their perspective. Their job as a board will be that they are committed to using their 1/7th voice, then when a choice is made they have one voice. They also want to make sure perspectives are heard and discussed how information can be presented to them. Board members added that when those conversations happen they are uncomfortable. It might be a good idea to remind people that while they may agree with them on the issue, they only have one vote on the board. Superintendent Klinger noted that there can also be friction between what is a board decision and what is a district decision. That can cause frustration in the community.

There was additional discussion on how to reply to emails from community members. Superintendent Klinger shared that when things get tougher, they need to lean into clear procedures and processes. They discussed possibly adding an item to their board agendas for communications follow up. That way the chair and/or superintendent can share information they have received. As the volume of emails increases, how the responses happen may change as well. They want to make sure they don't say that something will be on an agenda, but instead let them know it will be added to the list of possible topics. They discussed possibly holding public forums in addition to public comments. This way they could have more conversation with community members that come to speak and could ask follow-up questions.

The group discussed things they can be doing that will help them at this time. Some of that is already on their board operating agreements and they will work on some commitments together. The operating agreements are used as a

foundation. Superintendent Klinger noted that confidentiality is a really important part as they go into more challenging times. She also shared a document with sentence frames and strategies for difficult conversations. Just getting the conversation started can be the hard part. The group reviewed the sentence frames and it was noted that additional ones could be added to the list. Board members asked if there are any physical safety concerns with the meetings if they get a large crowd and there is an outburst. Superintendent Klinger shared that they have had security at meetings before if they know ahead of time. Even when they've had large crowds it has been safe and the groups have remained reasonable. Mr. Koch noted that with new board members they need to walk through the exit strategies again. Board members added that another strategy to keep the work moving forward is using Robert's Rules to call for the question.

For the board readiness assessment, Superintendent Klinger asked the board to take a minute to think about the tools on the reflection sheet. They will score them and as they get to the end, and they will think about these questions: where are they strongest right now, where do they need additional focus/clarity/training, what one commitment/action will guide their leadership this spring? The board was given a few minutes to complete their board readiness assessment. They were then asked to answer the questions again and score it based on if they were to change it from "we" to "I." After the self-reflection, board members shared where they think they are strongest right now. Answers included tenure of board members with experience, being able to have conversations about expectations without feeling concern, and having strong communication with positive, mutual respect. Superintendent Klinger noted that even though there is sometimes disagreement, the piece around composure and being calm and respectful has consistently been a big strength of the board.

Next, the board reviewed things they might need to focus on, have more clarity, or need training. The main answer from most board members was sense making and making sure they are focusing on student impact. Using consistent language that is accessible to the listener. There was discussion about the use of acronyms and how even if they know what an acronym stands for it is still important to know what it means. It can be hard to give context for each agenda item to the community during a meeting. As board members they have to have a lot of knowledge about the topic and make sense of it confidently. Questions that they ask are about clarity, not about pushback. Board members added that they would also like to have very focused conversation on what equity means, and how it impacts things as they make budget cuts. It is worth exploring and making sure they have an aligned understanding.

The group discussed commitments or actions that will guide their leadership this spring. Believing the best about each other and assuming pure intentions is important. That goes along with clarifying; assume the best and clarify when needed. They need to be on the same page as a board, and be prepared with their answers to the community. As they get into severe budget conversations and cuts, it gets really stressful and they need to remember they all have their best intents. Dr. Deboy noted that they should remember their commitment to being lead learners, and put themselves out there as still learning. Act in a way that shows they don't know it all, but are open to learning it. Another commitment shared was to agree to put all students first and look at aligning what equity means and how it plays out in action. The why is going to be so important to the community.

The board discussed what comes next in terms of actions and commitments, support needed, and the board self-reflection process. Superintendent Klinger reviewed the commitments that were shared. Board members like the idea of holding mini town halls / public forums, noting that this would be a board led model. They discussed what this might look like, resources that would be needed, and how soon they would want to start. The board felt these could be useful this spring to provide transparency and understanding about decisions as they move forward. They could format them so that the zoned board member attending along with 1 or 2 other board members. They could use some training from a professional resource on how to facilitate those meetings, and would need to research an outline or protocol noting the expectations and that they aren't making decisions. Superintendent Klinger encouraged the board to think about managing their own capacity and expectations, noting that they talked about the emotional toll it can take. They've

focused on engaging with the community in ways to share their priorities, but they haven't had opportunities to advocate for their thing. Thinking through that piece is important as part of the planning.

The board discussed the self-reflection process and what they thought of it. The newer board members like it, but also noted that they haven't been on the board long enough to really answer the question. They look forward to having more time on the board, noting that how they answer 2 years from now will be different than how they answer today. Other board members shared that every organization has areas of growth and strength. Without a process to evaluate themselves as a board it is hard to grow. Board members asked if they would do this once a year at this time, in August, or at another time during the year. They appreciated the tool noting that it gets to the core of discussion without being too complicated. They had distinct points of view but landed in similar spaces for what their challenges will be.

## **Recess/Reconvene**

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### **8. Board Recess (2:30 - 2:45 p.m.) (2:10 p.m.)**

The meeting was recessed at 2:10 p.m. and reconvened at 2:30 p.m.

## **Board Strategic Planning (cont.)**

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### **9. Strategic Planning Conversation (2:45 - 3:15 p.m.) (2:30 p.m.)**

Superintendent Klinger shared that they won't be making decisions on strategic planning today, but she wants them to look at some resources and think about it. They will review what is meant by strategic planning, what is a strategic plan, and why they are important. Then they will look at examples from other districts, options for next steps, and timelines. During the superintendent hiring process, priorities that came up included communication, instruction and student outcomes. The last formal strategic plan was completed from 2018 to 2021. It took place over multiple years with different pieces happening in that time. A typical plan is 5-7 years, and they need to start thinking about how those pieces fit together. Since then, a lot of requirements from ODE have changed, specifically related to the integrated grants process. As a new superintendent there is a need for a refresh and rebranding.

A Strategic Plan is a multi-year roadmap that defines what the district hopes to achieve, not just a to do list. It is focused on priorities, cores values, and strategic goals with performance indicators. It is important because it helps with alignment and focus, prevents initiative fatigue and gives them a way to say no if something doesn't fit into the parameters where resources have been assigned. It also helps with accountability and communication with the community and brings continuity during leadership transitions. Board members asked if there are positions where there is a sole person doing a single job. Superintendent Klinger shared they do have this in some areas, but they are pretty good at cross training. As an organization they have a lot of people in new positions.

Superintendent Klinger shared that they have a lot of things already in place that have come into play. The mission and vision were updated in 2018, and not long after that the Portrait of a Graduate was completed. The board conditions are part of this work and helps with priorities. Instruction is part of the integrated grants process, and they also have values of stewardship, community, and integrity. They will need to look at what they want to hold onto, and what are things they need to adjust, adapt, or let go of. There was discussion about the mission and vision and which one supports the other. Board members also noted that the board conditions make them wonder how it applies to them as a board member, and what they are doing to further that. They still need to talk about actions to go with the board conditions. Superintendent Klinger noted that some of these things are left undone and unclear. With a strategic plan everyone should know what each piece is and how it all comes together. What are the pieces they need to build. Board members noted that one piece that is missing is what they are doing as a board to be part of that partnership. Superintendent Klinger shared that there are some pieces they have used more than others. They have tried to be more clear about board conditions and connecting them to the instructional pieces. They don't really talk about Portrait of a Graduate.

The stewardship, community, and integrity piece is on the website but also not talked about.

Superintendent Klinger shared examples of strategic plans from other districts. The plans from Centennial and Hillsboro pull the pieces together the best, but each have different ways of presenting the information. Beaverton shows how to nicely use dropdowns for the website, and Mt. Angel is working with Studor and have good options as well. The group discussed next steps in the strategic planning process. Superintendent Klinger shared three options with the board:

- Option 1: Engage in Comprehensive Strategic Planning Process (est \$50-60K)
- Option 2: Utilize Consultant to Update Resources (est \$15-20k)
- Option 3: Utilize Integrated Grant Process 2 year cycle (est \$5k)

Option 1 is a resource intense process with a lot of staff time and funds. Option 2 could utilize a consultant to update what they have and look at what they like from their current plan. Option 3 can utilize their integrated grant process and would be more of an internal clean-up plan without facilitation. The cost with Option 3 is more about graphic design and making it look presentable on the website. The group had extensive conversation about the different options including topics around the associated costs, types of facilitation provided, and assistance available for branding and website accessibility. They discussed the possible need for an RFP or RFQ and the timeline for when this should start. They also had conversations about the good work that is already in place that could still be utilized in this process. After discussion, board members were leaning toward either Option 1 or Option 2. Board members will review the examples of strategic plans provided along with the website. They would like to do some backwards planning to determine the process timeline and bring this back to the board for further discussion at their March 12, 2026 work session.

#### **10. Budget Updates (3:15 - 4:00 p.m.) (3:16 p.m.)**

Superintendent Klinger reviewed the topics that will be covered in the budget update and introduced Pete Bejarano to assist with the presentation. Mr. Bejarano reviewed information that was last shared with the group in November. The driving factors impacting next year's budget include state funding not keeping pace with rising costs, declining enrollment, and uncertainty around state and federal grants. Payroll costs are more than 4% and skyrocketing PERS costs are a statewide issue. Utility costs, particularly energy costs and electricity bills are going up 8% in one year, and insurance costs are going up about 12% in one year. All of these are multimillion dollar expenses and create a wider gap as they increase. Compared to neighboring districts, Gresham-Barlow is down 6% for enrollment when others are down 10-20%.

There have been a number of news stories about HR 1 and its impact on state funding. There is talk about decoupling from the federal tax rules to help with the state budget shortfall. In November the shortfall was \$800 million, but that is now down to about \$500 million. The state has asked every department to submit cuts, and the legislature is meeting now to determine what to do. Both the House and Senate agreed to keep many of the federal grants, but they are doing flat funding which is still a cut. Gresham-Barlow estimates the 2026-27 budget reduction will need to be between \$7.5 million and \$13 million. Last year they already made cuts of \$8 million, so between two years they are cutting \$15.5 to \$21 million.

Superintendent Klinger reviewed reduction scenarios of various amounts. All of the uncertainty leaves them in a position where they have to be nimble and respond to whatever scenario happens in the next few weeks. The planning has helped them work through some processes. She highlighted the Reduction In Force (RIF) process noting that they have to cut deeper and then add back. Cutting deeper has a greater impact on staff, but a RIF process is so complex with so many moving parts that they can only do it once. Board members asked how likely it will be that they are having a conversation like this next year. Superintendent Klinger doesn't know that it is likely. They are looking at multiple years, and there will be some decision points for the board about set asides and funding projects. Their worry is around what

they don't know and can't control. A RIF will also take people out of the PERS pool which will impact PERS even more. Mr. Bejarano shared that per the board's direction, they have taken a look only at systemic changes that are long lasting and can echo savings for multiple years. They are not looking at band aids or one-year fixes. Superintendent Klinger noted that with where they were at last year they were not prepared to RIF. They have now had time to be really thoughtful in process and engaging the community. Board members asked if the RIF process presented to the board will be detailed and show how many teachers they are losing from each school. Superintendent Klinger clarified that it is basically presenting the board with a reduction in force and they are authorizing the process. It is also based on seniority per the contract. They don't want people finding out their job is in jeopardy from a list.

Superintendent Klinger shared that they think they are in Scenario A or A.5 with a reduction of \$10-11 million. When they talk about \$7.5 million that is about 4%. For FTE it is about 7 teachers for a million dollars. A day of expenses is \$710,000 and the Ending Fund Balance (EFB) right now is about 14 days of operating costs. Board members asked if they would consider cutting school days to save on staff cuts. Superintendent Klinger shared they have been asked that but haven't planned in that way because it is a short term fix and these are long-term problems. Mr. Bejarano added that their EFB has been decreasing every year to try and avoid a RIF. This is the first year they are under 8%. The board asked about the peak in 2021 and it was clarified that one of major reasons that expenses dropped off during the pandemic was because they didn't have things like transportation and sub costs.

Superintendent Klinger reviewed what's been done so far. They have been trying to have conversations early to be sure their leaders are well informed. They are engaging with the board and budget committee for the second time which is new for this process. In February there were a lot of community engagement events, and they have been busy trying to keep people as informed as possible. Many people don't engage with information until it impacts them, and they know that's coming. There was an in person event for people to learn about the budget and how money is spent. Groups helped with prioritization, then completed surveys to include their personal prioritizations. Everything they were asked to prioritize is important. She was impressed with the openness of conversation with a lot of sharing of perspectives. They also had a webinar where they shared the same information and had an extensive Q&A. They currently have over 750 responses for the survey. They tried to get people thinking in level buckets, and as they start to look at reductions they are thinking about it in the same approach. They need to look at reductions in a comprehensive way. Superintendent Klinger shared the reductions made last year and how they affected different levels.

Next, they reviewed the points for how they have drafted the 2026-27 reduction list. This included developing guiding principles and prioritization and equity questions. Every department and school will see reductions. They are looking at areas that are being slowed down enough that they might as well eliminate them. Ultimately, the levels of reductions are based on math. Once they have that calculation then they work with building administrators to see if it is even possible. The other message they are sharing is that if there is something they need to add, then there is something else they need to cut. They aren't able to specialize by level based on declining enrollment. They have to look at it broadly program by program to see if they have met their target.

Superintendent Klinger noted that they are in a "wait and see" position while waiting for federal clarity. This means they will need a contingency plan in place with ongoing communication to keep people updated. They are working with labor groups to make sure seniority lists are correct. Mr. Hartsock suggested adding a local option levy to the list of potential sources so the public can see they have looked at all options. Superintendent Klinger noted she has been asked this twice and it is a conversation the board will need to have. Mr. Bejarano reviewed the budget process, clarifying that District Staff and the Superintendent handle communication, programmatic decisions, and spending allocations, while the Budget Committee's role is to provide feedback, input, and approve appropriation, ratios, and function-level budget. He also emphasized that the General Fund is the only unrestricted fund and they have full control over how they use those dollars. The other funds are restricted by law, and can only be used with their program or for specific types of

students. He reviewed the legal appropriations showing what function levels cover each program.

Superintendent Klinger reviewed the meeting dates for the budget committee noting that they historically submit their budget to the TSCC (Tax Supervising & Conservation Commission) in May with board approval in June. As they start to look at things from the HR and staffing side, March 16th is when notices go out to staff planning to return, and they have to respond by April 15th. Sometimes in that window they find out someone is retiring or moving out of state or country and they identify openings. That is when they want to start assigning people and doing the RIF process. The goal is to start notifying staff at the end of April. This causes a challenge with the April 16th budget meeting date. Individual employees may see that their job is in jeopardy. One of the goals from the very beginning is to take the very best care of staff, which means having them find out in the best way, in a timely and accurate way without a lot of speculation. They would like to look at different options. The first would be to leave the dates as is and the district would do their best to mitigate staff that might be identifiable in the budget book. Option 2 is to push everything out 2 weeks and have the first meeting April 30th, with the second meeting May 14th, but then they wouldn't have the budget hearing until June 18th. Option 3 is to still push the dates out 2 weeks but not have TSCC do a review this year. There was discussion around whether the TSCC review was needed, and it was noted that the review is not a legal requirement. Board and committee members suggested moving forward with Option 3 and not having the TSCC review. There was additional discussion around which dates to reschedule the budget committee meetings.

**MOTION 64:** Move to set our first budget committee meeting for April 29th and our second for May 13th. This motion, made by Blake Petersen and seconded by Brenna Puderbaugh, Carried.

Aye: Heather Coleman-Cox, Shawn Farrens, Kris Howatt, Blake Petersen, Brenna Puderbaugh, Holly Riegelmann

Aye: 6, No: 0

Mr. Green noted that last year there was a question about how many staff were currently employed and after adjustments how many there would be. They would like actual numbers this year. Mr. Bejarano noted that they will be as precise with as much clarity as possible while knowing that it is a plan.

## **Recess / Reconvene**

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### **Board Recess (4:23 p.m.)**

The meeting was recessed at 4:23 p.m. and reconvened at 4:32 p.m.

## **Closing Items**

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### **11. Next Steps and Announcements (4:00 p.m.) (5:22 p.m.)**

Board members were reminded to do the homework shared during the meeting, and if they haven't turned in their board superintendent evaluation the deadline was moved to Monday. Chair Petersen reviewed the announcements included in the board agenda packet. A Zoom link for virtual meeting attendance will be provided for upcoming meetings.

March 5, 2026: Board Special Work Session - 6 p.m.

Council Chambers Conference Room

Public Safety and Schools Building

MARCH 5, 2026: Regular Board Business Meeting - 7 p.m.

Council Chambers

Public Safety and Schools Building

**12. Adjournment (4:00 p.m.) (5:23 p.m.)**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:23 p.m.

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_

Sarah Avery  
Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and  
Board of Directors

Note: These minutes were approved by the board on \_\_\_\_\_:sa

DRAFT