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

October 29, 2008

The Board of Directors of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a work session at 5:30 p.m. on October 29, 2008, at the Education Center, 200 North Monroe Street, Eugene, Oregon. Notice of the meeting was mailed to the media and posted in the Education Center on October 24, 2008, and published in The Register-Guard on October 27, 2008.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS:
Charles Martinez, Jr., Chair
Yvette Webber-Davis, Vice Chair
Eric Forrest
Beth Gerot
Alicia Hays
Craig Smith
Jim Torrey

STAFF:
George Russell, Superintendent of Schools and District Clerk
Barbara Bellamy, Chief of Staff and Communications Director
Tom Henry, Deputy Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer
Carl Hermanns, Assistant Superintendent/Chief Operating Officer
Jon Lauch, Director of Facilities Management
Jan Anderson, Transportation Manager
Edward Goodnough, Transportation Operations Supervisor

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:
Joe Kammerer, North Eugene High School

MEDIA:
KRVM

CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND FLAG SALUTE
Board Chair Charles Martinez called the work session of the School District 4J Board of Directors to order at 5:41 p.m. and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Shaping 4J's Future Update: Transportation, Transfer Limits at Middle and High Schools, Boundary Review

Introduction and Overview

Superintendent George Russell briefly reviewed the goals of the work session for the benefit of the board, noting that they included a review of recent strategy discussions, a review of the core values of School District 4J, a preview of implementation strategies, and an opportunity to clarify the intentions or to ask questions concerning the work session discussions.
Superintendent Russell provided a slide presentation describing the initial drivers for the board’s *Shaping 4J’s Future* process, as well as slides describing the strategic direction for that process. He proceeded to briefly review the goals of the district, as well as the board charge from February 2006 that had directed them to review enrollment patterns, school boundaries, alternative school relocation, school closures/consolidations, and possible new school construction/renovation.

Superintendent Russell reminded the board that the *Shaping 4J’s Future* process had been grounded in the district’s core values of excellence, equity and choice. He continued to describe the goals and principles of the *Shaping 4J’s Future* process that had been included in the January 28, 2008 briefing document distributed to the board.

Superintendent Russell reported that the recommendations which had been adopted and implemented as part of the *Shaping 4J’s Future* process had either been specific to a particular school or site, or more generally adopted throughout the district.

Superintendent Russell briefed the board on several of the adopted recommendations listed in the “*Shaping 4J’s Future: Setting a Strategic Direction for 2008-2013*” document that had been distributed to the board.

Superintendent Russell commented that a report on potential program alteration options at Adams Elementary School in the Churchill Region would be presented to the board on November 19, 2008 and would include data on the feasibility of Spanish or Chinese Language Immersion programs.

Superintendent Russell commented further that a report on the efforts to consolidate the Harris and Eastside school communities in the Churchill Region would be presented to the board on December 3, 2008.

Superintendent Russell stated that the charter schools currently operating in the Willard building in the Churchill Region would need to be relocated once that building was decommissioned as had been recommended.

Superintendent Russell noted that the recommended relocations of the Charlemagne French Immersion program in the Churchill Region and the Buena Vista Spanish Immersion program in the Sheldon Region would complete the uncoupling of those schools with their previous locations.

Superintendent Russell stated that the board had recommended maintaining the existing schools and locations in the North Region, although there had been discussion regarding the possibility of combining or creating schools in that area. He added that a subsequent decision had been made by the board to consider and receive a proposal by December 2008 for a dual language Spanish Immersion program for the River Road/El Camino del Rio Elementary School which would include Howard Elementary School in some sort of neighborhood cluster.

Superintendent Russell briefed the board on the four district-wide strategy recommendations regarding differentiation of staffing allocations, transfer limits, boundary revisions, and transportation in greater detail.
Transportation Study

Director of Facilities Management Jon Lauch briefed the board on the elements of the School Choice-Regional Transportation Analysis (RTA) that had been distributed to the board.

Mr. Lauch noted that the School Choice Transportation Analysis for regional alternative schools performed in the South Region by Edward Goodnough, Transportation Operations Supervisor, had examined the potential costs necessary to provide transportation to the Fox Hollow Elementary School.

Dr. Martinez asked Mr. Lauch to give some indication of the range of fuel costs and how much the resultant transportation costs might fluctuate in that regard. Mr. Lauch and Mr. Goodnough responded that the transportation increase would be between $1,000 and $2,000 per bus route after reimbursements. Dr. Martinez remarked that while fuel costs were usually unpredictable, it might be helpful to agree upon a margin of error for the transportation estimates so that they did not end up going over budget on fuel.

Jan Anderson, Transportation Manager, commented that labor costs represented the highest percentage of the costs incurred for transportation on any of the bus routes within the district.

Mr. Lauch directed the board to their copies of memos between himself and Mr. Goodnough dated August 28, 2008, in order to describe the cost analysis associated with the Regional School Choice Operating Requirements listed in the RTA. Mr. Lauch noted that the breakdowns he was referring to described the costs of 26 bus routes versus 30 bus routes.

Mr. Lauch presented an aerial photograph of the district bus center for the benefit of the board, noting the dimensions and properties of the same.

Mr. Lauch, responding to a question from Board Vice Chair Yvette Webber-Davis, commented that all 91 district school buses currently fit inside the bus center.

Board Member Jim Torrey asked if there were any available properties adjacent to the bus center that might be used for purchase and/or expansion. Mr. Lauch directed the board to the Capital Improvements portion of the RTA, and answered that his office had reviewed four available properties that might be used for expansion of the bus center. Mr. Lauch noted that neither of the two properties that were considered viable sites for expansion was currently for sale.

Mr. Lauch, responding to a question from Superintendent Russell, noted that the bus center would ideally need at least two acres in a desirable configuration upon which to expand.

Mr. Lauch expressed that any acquisitions of property for expansion of the bus center would incur costs not only for the actual purchase price of the property, but also any additional costs needed to demolish or similarly renovate such properties into suitable parking spaces for the center.

Mr. Lauch directed the board to a copy of a summary describing the district’s financial options and cost estimates for Transportation Facility Expansion. He commented that more detailed breakdowns of the cost estimates were available if the board desired them.
Mr. Torrey stated he was hesitant to negotiate potential purchases of property during the work session.

Board Member Craig Smith asked if there had been any guesses as to how the state legislature was looking at the transportation subsidies for the district. Superintendent Russell replied that the legislature would be receiving a committee report in November that might potentially affect the transportation subsidies.

Mr. Lauch, responding to a request for clarification from Superintendent Russell, noted that one of the main obstacles to providing additional transportation opportunities for district students was the matter of where the buses could be parked.

Dr. Martinez expressed that the $3 to $6 million listed in the RTA as being necessary to incorporate three new buses seemed excessive. He asked to what extent other factors might be influencing the matter and whether or not the 91 buses already being used would continue to be sufficient for the district’s future needs. Mr. Lauch responded that the enrollment growth and special needs factors related to district transportation needs were highly unpredictable and would make it very difficult for the district to consolidate schools as outlined in the Shaping 4J’s Future process without incorporating additional buses.

Board Member Eric Forrest asked what the current property values for the bus center were. Mr. Lauch responded that he did not know.

Mr. Forrest questioned the long term viability of the location of the bus center and commented that the site seemed better suited to some sort of commercial use. He suggested that in the long term it might be better to sell the current property and relocate the bus center to a larger site with better opportunities for expansion. Mr. Lauch responded that the bus center was ideally and centrally located with regard to the geographic nature of the district and that it might not be feasible to relocate it.

Mr. Torrey suggested that if the national economic climate were to improve that it might be reasonable to explore the possibility of relocating the bus center, particularly if there was the possibility of receiving federal assistance to do so. Mr. Smith agreed with Mr. Torrey’s suggestion.

Board Member Alicia Hays noted that the cost estimates described by Mr. Lauch did not support the position that the transportation center should be expanded. She further commented that to do so would not be commensurate with the board’s goal of increasing accessibility to families for alternative schools, particularly in light of data that indicated that families would most likely not utilize the buses that would be used. Board Member Beth Gerot agreed with Ms. Hays’ position.

Dr. Martinez commented that he was not confident in the different types of conflicting data that had been collected regarding public interest in transportation expansions with respect to alternative school opportunities. He noted that without more reliable data on the issue, an investment in the transportation center might not be advisable.

Mr. Forrest responded to Dr. Martinez’s comments and suggested that the district needed to perform some sort of pilot program to test the viability of district transportation options with respect to alternative schools.
Ms. Hays noted that the data and the comments from the public were often very conflicting with respect to how transportation might be used with respect to alternative schools.

Dr. Martinez said that the portions of the population most likely to use alternative schools had not been surveyed properly with respect to how they might like to see transportation provided.

Ms. Hays expressed that the transportation issues being discussed were getting in the way of the district carrying out the objectives of the Shaping 4J's Future process. She hoped that the board would put the matter to bed soon and deal with the transportation issues quickly and effectively.

Mr. Forrest opined that the transportation issues and the conflicting data regarding the public's intent were basically marketing problems that could only be solved by attempting some sort of pilot program and then studying the results of that program.

Dr. Martinez said that there might be a potential test of the transportation system for River Road Elementary School that might warrant further investigation.

Ms. Gerot noted that the test program related to River Road might not give an accurate representation of the way transportation needs for alternative schools would be addressed.

Superintendent Russell commented that he was reluctant to take on anything that had significant additional costs without an indication as to what future financial resources would be, or at least some indication as to what Governor Kulongoski's budget would be.

Mr. Lauch noted that if the district were to employ some sort of pilot program involving transportation for alternative schools, there might be factors that could mitigate increased costs such as leasing property on which to park buses or potential satellite bus parking facilities.

Mr. Lauch stated that he would need some indication or direction from the board as to whether the recommendations and assumptions listed in the RTA satisfied the board’s goals with regard to current and future district transportation policies.

Transfer Limits At Middle and High Schools

Deputy Superintendent Tom Henry noted that the enrollment figures from his presentation materials which had been distributed to the board did not represent hard data and could possibly change by one or two percent after the October enrollment figures were tabulated.

Mr. Henry proceeded to brief the board on the Transfer Limits at High Schools data for the benefit of the board.

Mr. Henry noted that the projected high school enrollment decline projected through 2010 had been anticipated by the district evaluations of elementary and middle school enrollment numbers. He reiterated his comments from a previous board meeting that it appeared that the decline in enrollment had apparently begun to level off in the district elementary and middle schools.

Mr. Henry, in presenting the 2008 high school enrollment figures, described how the district had arrived at the maximum number of students from each region that would be allowed to transfer to a different school.
Mr. Henry proceeded to brief the board on the 2009-2010 High School Enrollment Estimates and the corresponding transfer projections that had been based upon the 7.5% transfer limit directed by the board.

Dr. Martinez expressed that the potential freshman sibling transfer figures might have a negative effect on enrollment management efforts related to the freshman class.

Mr. Torrey asked Mr. Henry to extrapolate the high school enrollment figures for the next five to ten years based on the current projections. Mr. Henry replied that the total enrollment would drop by between 100 and 200 students and then level out based on current trends.

Mr. Torrey was worried that a continuing drop in enrollment numbers might jeopardize the district’s ability to maintain four regions and four high schools.

Mr. Forrest asked when the Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA) would be reviewing high school enrollment numbers. Barb Bellamy, Chief of Staff and Communications Director, responded that the OSAA would be reviewing the enrollment numbers in the coming months.

Mr. Henry noted that the board had discussed the notion of having three larger high schools and one smaller high school if enrollment figures did not support maintaining four comprehensive high schools of equal size.

Mr. Smith, responding to Mr. Torrey’s concerns, noted that one thing the district could do would be to reduce the size of each of the four district high schools.

Mr. Henry proceeded to brief the board on the Transfer Limits at Middle Schools data for the benefit of the board, noting that there were also significant reductions in enrollment projected through 2010.

Mr. Henry wished he could have been able to project enrollment figures through 2012, but noted that it would have been prohibitively difficult for him to do so.

Mr. Forrest recognized that the projected enrollment figures were indeed reflective of what the board had directed with respect to transfer limits.

Dr. Martinez noted that it would be very challenging for the district to deal with a negative flow of students in certain schools. Mr. Henry added that the most significant impact in that regard would be felt by South Eugene High School (SEHS) and the International High School program at SEHS.

Superintendent Russell, responding to a question from Mr. Torrey, commented that there would be significant staffing challenges as a result of implementing the transfer limits as directed by the board.

Ms. Gerot noted that programs at schools such as Roosevelt Middle School were designed around established enrollment numbers, and that declines in enrollment would necessitate changes beyond only staffing reductions.
Mr. Henry, responding to comments from Mr. Smith and Ms. Hays, noted that siblings within the district would not be adversely affected by the board-directed transfer limits and that no student would be prevented from transferring to or from a school attended by their brother or sister.

Dr. Martinez recognized that the projected enrollment figures were indeed reflective of what the board had directed with respect to transfer limits, but was concerned that the board had made no specific exceptions for siblings to the transfer limit policies. Superintendent Russell noted that if the board wanted to make such provisions for siblings they would need to change the policy they had adopted.

Dr. Martinez commented that making any exceptions for siblings to the adopted transfer policies might significantly undermine the enrollment management efforts of the district.

Ms. Hays commented that the district would need to clearly and expressly notify the public of the transfer limit policies with respect to siblings as soon as possible.

Superintendent Russell briefly discussed which schools would still be able to accept transfers of siblings based on current enrollment figures.

Mr. Torrey asked if it would be possible to vote to include exceptions for siblings in the transfer limit policy during the work session. Superintendent Russell answered that it would not be, but that the board could do so during a future regular board meeting.

Superintendent Russell and Mr. Torrey confirmed the board’s position that they were not currently requesting staff to take any actions toward making exceptions for siblings or any similar revisions to the adopted transfer limit policies.

Dr. Martinez agreed with Ms. Hays' previous comment regarding public notification of the transfer limit policies, and noted that the district’s efforts in notifying the public would be highly important once the policies had begun to be implemented.

The board briefly discussed how staff might best be directed to notify the public of all aspects of the transfer limit policies.

Dr. Martinez hoped that the public would take a more active role in learning about the full nature of the transfer policies once they were implemented than they had during the drafting and discussion phase of the policy.

Ms. Gerot noted that her discussion with staff members at Roosevelt Middle School indicated that they were reasonably aware of most of the aspects of the transfer limit policies. She added that parents of district students were probably the ones least aware of the nuances of the transfer limit policies.

**Boundary Review**

Ms. Bellamy briefed the board on staff’s review of school boundaries within the district using three maps that had been distributed to the board.
Ms. Bellamy briefly reviewed the direction staff had been given by the board regarding the school boundary review, and then proceeded to brief the board on the staff’s key considerations in the review process with respect to the Shaping 4J’s Future process and as reflected in the School Boundary Review document distributed to the board.

Ms. Bellamy continued to brief the board on the remainder of the information from the School Boundary Review, including the staff review team’s assumptions and considered options.

Ms. Bellamy noted that the information and input process portion of the boundary review would begin in mid-November and run through December of 2008, with final recommendations to be presented to the superintendent no later than January of 2009.

Ms. Bellamy briefed the board on the review team’s Preliminary Staff Recommendations. She noted that the first three boundary revision options considered by the review team, which would alter elementary school boundaries in the South Eugene and Churchill attendance areas, would leave students in the same middle and high school attendance area they were currently in.

Ms. Gerot was concerned that the revised boundaries might cause the Crest and Edison Elementary Schools to exceed their respective capacities. Ms. Bellamy responded the Crest and Edison were smaller neighborhood schools where increased enrollment resulting from a boundary change might not cause the schools to exceed their capacities.

Ms. Gerot asked if the proposed boundary changes would require further limitations on student transfers beyond what had been discussed earlier in the work session. Mr. Henry responded that that was correct.

Dr. Martinez shared Ms. Gerot’s concern that boundary changes would negatively impact enrollment at Crest and Edison.

Dr. Martinez asked for clarification regarding the figures in the Preliminary Staff Recommendations, and indicated it would be helpful to know more about how and why students might be transferring from elementary schools such as Harris and Edison.

Mr. Henry, responding to a question from Superintendent Russell, described how many students from Adams Elementary School had transferred into Edison versus how many students from Harris had transferred into Edison.

Dr. Martinez commented that it was important for the board to work hard to strengthen the elementary schools. He indicated he was concerned about how the proposed boundary changes might disrupt those efforts.

Ms. Bellamy briefed the board on the remainder of the Preliminary Staff Recommendations, which would change the boundaries between the North Eugene, South Eugene, and Churchill regions.

Dr. Webber-Davis asked if the review team had considered moving the east Skinner Butte and downtown areas into the Churchill region instead of the South Eugene region. Ms. Bellamy answered that they had not done so primarily because of the increased distance between the schools and the students in the region that would have resulted from such a change.
Ms. Bellamy commented that the preliminary recommendation to move the College Hill west area into the South Eugene region would have no effect upon the elementary schools in that area although it would affect the middle and high schools.

Ms. Bellamy briefly described boundary changes that were expected to be recommended to the board in the future and which would affect the Willamette Gardens apartment area in the Sheldon region as well as the North Eugene attendance areas.

Mr. Smith felt it was important to be cautious with respect to potential boundary changes as such changes might hamper any district efforts to encourage greater enrollment.

Ms. Bellamy reminded the board that the information and input process with regard to the boundary changes would begin with an open house or similar public meeting at each of the schools that would potentially be impacted by the proposed changes.

**ADJOURN**

Dr. Martinez adjourned the work session at 7:54 p.m.

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George Russell     Charles Martinez, Jr.
District Clerk      Board Chair

(Recorded by Wade Hicks)

**Attachments to Official Minutes:**
1. *Shaping 4J’s Future: Setting a Strategic Direction for 2008-13*
2. School Choice – Regional Transportation Analysis (RTA)
3. Memos regarding Transportation Costs
4. Summary – Transportation Facility Expansion
5. High School and Middle School Enrollment and Transfer Limit Information
6. School Boundary Review