MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SCHOOL DISTRICT 4J, LANE COUNTY, OREGON

December 16, 2009

The Board of Directors of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held an executive session at 5:30 p.m., followed by a regular board meeting at 7 p.m. on December 16, 2009, 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 December 11, 2009, and published in The Register-Guard on December 14, 2009.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS:
Craig Smith, Chair
Beth Gerot, Vice Chair
Jennifer Geller
Alicia Hays
Anne Marie Levis
Jim Torrey
Mary Walston

STAFF:
George Russell, Superintendent of Schools and District Clerk
Barbara Bellamy, Chief of Staff and Communications Director
Susan Fahey, Chief Financial Officer
Carl Hermanns, Assistant Superintendent/Chief Academic Officer
Celia Feres-Johnson, Director of Human Resources
Larry Sullivan, Director of Educational Support Services
Christine Nesbit, Associate Director of Human Resources
Ron Wilson, Human Resources Contract Consultant
Larry Soberman, District Bargaining Team
Randy Bernstein, District Bargaining Team
Jeralynn Beghetto, District Bargaining Team

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Under provisions of ORS 192.610 – 192.690, Open Meeting Laws, the Board of Directors conducted an Executive Session for the following purpose: To conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to carry on labor negotiations pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(d).

REGULAR BOARD MEETING: The Executive Session recessed and the regular meeting convened with the above board members and staff present along with the following:

STAFF:
Laurie Moses, Director of Secondary Education
Jon Lauch, Director of Facilities Management
Sara Cramer, Director of Elementary Education
Caroline Passerotti, Financial Analysis Manager
Juan Cuadros, Buena Vista/Meadowlark Principal
Rick Sherman, Nutrition Services Director
STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:
Jenna Careccia, Churchill High School
Sasha Johnson-Freyd, South Eugene High School
Jennifer Kerfoot, North Eugene High School

OTHERS
Paul Duchin, Eugene Education Association Co-President
Merri Steele, Eugene Education Association Co-President
Jason Dedrick, Planning and Development Department, City of Eugene
Lisa Gardner, Planning and Development Department, City of Eugene

MEDIA:
KRVM

CALL TO ORDER AND FLAG SALUTE

Board Chair Craig Smith called the regular meeting of the School District 4J Board of Directors to order at 7 p.m. and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA REVIEW

There were no changes to the agenda.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS AND SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Superintendent George Russell drew the board’s attention to a December 14, 2009, letter to superintendents across the state from Governor Ted Kulongoski regarding Oregon’s Race to the Top grant application, which included a memorandum of understanding (MOU) and a summary of what Oregon would submit as the basis of its grant application. He said the superintendent of the district was required to sign the MOU and it was the expectation that the school board president and local association president would also sign. He reviewed the grant application summary “Embracing Change.” He said the State was clear that it wanted an MOU signed by all three parties from every district, although acknowledged there were concerns about making a commitment without knowing exactly what that would mean. He said the MOU had to be submitted by January 8, 2010.

Superintendent Russell said the Superintendent’s Student Advisory Committee met on December 8, 2009, and a copy of the minutes was included in the red folder. He was pleased with the level of interest, participation and commitment from students, who asked to meet monthly rather than less often throughout the year.

Superintendent Russell commended staff of the River Road/Camino del Rio dual immersion program and congratulated the Sheldon High School football team.

COMMENTS BY STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Sasha Johnson-Freyd, South Eugene High School, reported that the food drive had been very successful. She said Mary Beth Tinker spoke recently on the subject of free speech and students rights and many students attended the event.
Jennifer Kerfoot, North Eugene High School, reported that freshmen had completed their national geographic projects and had an opportunity to meet with international students from the University of Oregon. Sophomores completed a project related to religions of the world and there was good feedback from both students and parents. She said juniors and seniors were finishing their projects.

Jenna Careccia, Churchill High School, reported that the word “discipline” was being replaced with “diversity” in the motto PRIDE (perseverance, respect, integrity, discipline, excellence) in order to facilitate discussion about diversity among the student body.

ITEMS RAISED BY THE AUDIENCE

John VanLandingham, Lane County Legal Aid and Housing Policy Board, explained the state statute that provided a property tax exemption for affordable housing. He distributed a list of affordable housing projects that had been built since 1992. He said without the exemption some of the projects would not have been built and the City had been a careful steward of the program. Projects were reviewed by the Housing Policy Board and all had been successful. He said there was a direct connection with the district’s mission of education because affordable housing provided support for starter families and low-income families with children. He said the district had supported affordable housing by endorsing the tax exemption in the early 1990’s and asked for the district’s support for extending the program, which was scheduled to sunset at the end of 2009.

Richie Weinman, City of Eugene Community Development Division, said that Representative Phil Barnhart planned to introduce a bill to extend the affordable housing program during the February 2010 special legislative session. He asked that the district provide a letter of support for an extension of the program prior to the start of the session and provided a draft for the board’s consideration.

Peggy Dimitri, parent of Meadowlark Elementary School students and site council member, spoke to the addition of a kindergarten to Buena Vista Elementary School. She said the site council was only recently informed about the plan and while supportive of Buena Vista’s need for a kindergarten, had some concerns. She said the site council did not support taking space from Meadowlark and allocating it to Buena Vista as Meadowlark had an ongoing need for that space. She said the space in question consisted of portable classrooms provided by the district in 2007-08 in response to Meadowlark’s need for additional space. The school had the same population and space needs now as it did then, with crowded and blended grade classrooms. She asked that Meadowlark parents be given a voice in the decision to add a kindergarten to Buena Vista and that both schools be given 1.0 FTE for the kindergarten transition.

Marilyn Koenig, Meadowlark Elementary School teacher, spoke on behalf of staff at Meadowlark. She said the Instructional Leadership Team had not yet spoken to Meadowlark’s staff, site council or parent group and many felt coming to the board meeting was the only way to make their voices heard. She said giving an alternative school 1.0 FTE at a time of declining enrollment in the district worked against the success and viability of a neighborhood school. She noted that Meadowlark was the only co-located neighborhood school remaining in the district. She said Meadowlark was greatly impacted by fluctuating enrollment, which made it challenging for staff to deliver instruction.

Wendy Laing, parent of a Buena Vista student, spoke on behalf of the parent organization and teachers in support of implementing a kindergarten at Buena Vista and raising the enrollment
cap to 275. She said the other 24 elementary schools in the district already had a kindergarten and there was a constant demand for one at Buena Vista. She said the alternative review committee believed the Buena Vista program and the district's educational program would be enhanced by adding a kindergarten and that was also supported by Principal Juan Cuadros and Superintendent Russell. She said the modular structure built two years ago on the Meadowlark/Buena Vista site contained two classrooms, which were to be used exclusively by Meadowlark for one year and thereafter one classroom would be available to Buena Vista; that classroom was the space to be used for a kindergarten.

Joy Koenig, Buena Vista Elementary School teacher, asserted that school administration and staffs of Meadowlark and Buena Vista were aware of the agreement to use the modular classrooms for both schools and staffs and site councils had input into the arrangement. She said Meadowlark was currently using the modular part-time to facilitate a Spanish class funding by a grant expiring at the end of the year. She said programs funded by grants should not be allowed to overshadow long-term programs and strategies that were ultimately better for students. Buena Vista’s use of one of the modular classrooms would maximize the efficient and practical use of all classrooms at the combined Meadowlark/Buena Vista site. She said Buena Vista had waited 26 years and urged the board to listen to staff and the superintendent and approve a Buena Vista kindergarten, which would be consistent with the board’s guiding beliefs and values.

COMMENTS BY EMPLOYEE GROUPS

Paul Duchin, Eugene Education Association (EEA) Co-President, commented that he had received documents related to Oregon’s Race to the Top grant application and he and Merri Steele, EEA Co-President, would consult with the EEA board of directors to discuss the association’s position. He said there were several areas of grave concern that would significantly alter the collective bargaining agreement. He said the materials would be reviewed over the winter break and a decision would be made on January 4, 2010.

Ms. Steele presented and read a letter from the EEA executive board expressing dismay at the lack of agreement with the Eugene Association of Substitute Teachers and urging the board to direct the district’s negotiation team to reach agreement with guest teachers as they are an integral component of the district’s instructional program and a fair settlement is in the best interests of all concerned.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Receive a Report on the District’s Elementary Culinary Competition

Rick Sherman, Nutrition Services Director, invited board members to be judges at the first annual Elementary Culinary Competition at South Eugene High School on February 15, 2010. He said 50 participants from 4th and 5th grades would be partnered with high school culinary arts students to compete in a healthy snack “cook-off.”

Mr. Smith asked the board to take up the item related to a kindergarten program at Buena Vista Elementary School next on the agenda because of the large number of parents and teachers in the audience who were interested in the issue. There were no objections.
ITEMS FOR ACTION AT A FUTURE MEETING

Approve the Addition of a Kindergarten Program at Buena Vista Elementary School

Meadowlark/Buena Vista Principal Juan Cuadros and Director of Elementary Education Sara Cramer presented the item.

Buena Vista adopted the full immersion program in the 2005-06 school year. Research indicates that the earlier language acquisition can begin, the stronger the bond to the language. When students enter the school at the onset of their education, they can be included earlier in all aspects of the school culture, such as school assemblies, celebrations, activities and the building of school traditions. The Buena Vista kindergarteners would attend the same facility as their older siblings, and the parents who transport them to and from school would benefit.

During the Alternative School Review Committee’s visits to the other two language immersion schools in the district (both of which have kindergartens), the educational advantage, in terms of language development, for children who begin a language immersion program in kindergarten, became clearly apparent. Looking at this information as well as evidence gathered through discussions with the staffs and families of both Buena Vista and Meadowlark, the Alternative School Review Committee Revised Report dated February 2007, page 11 stated: “Additionally, we believe that both Buena Vista’s program and the district’s educational program would be further enhanced by adding a kindergarten at Buena Vista.” The Review Committee believed that the lack of a kindergarten at Buena Vista disadvantaged both Meadowlark and Buena Vista. Meadowlark struggles with the loss of significant numbers of their kindergarten students who attend kindergarten at Meadowlark, their neighborhood school, but then transfer to Buena Vista at first grade. Adding the kindergarten to Buena Vista would help mitigate this current situation.

The principal and the staff of Buena Vista support the addition of kindergarten at Buena Vista. The Meadowlark staff supports the Buena Vista kindergarten but with concerns on the impact it will have on Meadowlark. The site council for Buena Vista Elementary supports the addition of the kindergarten. The Meadowlark site council supports the addition but with concerns. Their reservations are: The impact on facilities, such as playground, parking, and scheduling with specialists, music and P.E. The Meadowlark staff and the Meadowlark Parent Organization also share these concerns. Principal Juan Cuadros processed with both staffs and both parent groups to address all the above issues. Meadowlark and Buena Vista Elementary understand that the double modular classrooms are to be used to “solve site crunch issues, and it is a site module, not exclusive to either school.” One half of the portable could be used for the Buena Vista kindergarten. Furthermore, both staffs know that a kindergarten is what is best for kids. Therefore, space is available for the Buena Vista kindergarten.

There have been concerns expressed that there is not space available at the facility to house both programs with kindergarten through fifth grade. At the present time, the Meadowlark Spanish teacher uses this space, but this program may not be available next year. The modular could be repurposed for a kindergarten classroom and that will be the plan for both programs to work together to determine how to use the current facility to its greatest advantage.

The Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) reviewed the Buena Vista kindergarten proposal. Before this meeting, Principal Cuadros presented the proposal of adding a kindergarten at Buena Vista to the other elementary principals and they gave their consent. In addition, he met with the Sheldon region principals and they too gave their approval of Buena Vista having a kindergarten.
Significant budget cuts are impacting the district this biennium. The only additional costs would be the salary of a 1.0 FTE kindergarten teacher for the transitional year, which the Instruction Department has agreed to fund, if approved. Subsequent year staffing resources will be tied to the ratio and number of students enrolled. The school will handle the purchase of needed curriculum and furniture. The Buena Vista Parent Organization will financially support these efforts.

Superintendent Russell noted that this recommendation differed from his recommendation as part of Shaping 4J’s Future. His recommendation then was that while he supported the addition of kindergarten at Buena Vista, kindergarten should only be added after establishing Buena Vista as a stand-alone school or moving it to a non-neighborhood school site. However, subsequent decisions have made it clear that such a decision is farther off than originally intended, and that the current space will allow for Buena Vista kindergarten without having to provide additional facilities. Therefore, his recommendation is predicated upon the expectation and understanding that the Buena Vista kindergarten will be accommodated within the existing facility and other resources available to the Meadowlark/Buena Vista site.

Principal Cuadros said the planning process for a Buena Vista kindergarten, which was the only school in the district without one, had begun long ago. He distributed a letter to the school board highlighting the reasons why a kindergarten would enhance both Buena Vista’s and the district’s educational programs. He acknowledged concerns about the impact of a Buena Vista kindergarten on Meadowlark and said he was working closely with parents and staff to address their issues.

In response to a question from Board Member Jim Torrey, Principal Cuadros estimated that kindergarten enrollment could be up to 50 students, with 25 attending in the morning and 25 in the afternoon; however, with the current enrollment levels in upper grades he could not accommodate that many. He said one of the modular classrooms was larger and there would need to be some adjustments to assure the best use of space for students. Currently, one classroom was being used for Spanish instruction and the other by a student achievement coordinator.

Board Member Alicia Hays agreed that there were space constraints at the Meadowlark/Buena Vista site. Her major concern was that the issue of a kindergarten would continue to drive a wedge between the neighborhood and alternative schools and negatively affect students. She hoped for a resolution that would achieve a positive result for both schools.

Principal Cuadros said the problems stemmed from co-location of the schools and as the incoming principal he was looking at the Meadowlark program in a different way and working with staff to make it more viable and attractive and address the concerns and issues raised by staff and parents.

Mr. Smith agreed with Ms. Hays concerns. He asked if a decision by the board should be deferred.

Board Member Mary Walston fully supported a Buena Vista kindergarten, but did not want that to be at the expense of Meadowlark. She referred to a December 14 letter from the Meadowlark Parent Organization asking the board to hold harmless the Meadowlark kindergarten funding for 1.0 FTE and consider expanding the Meadowlark enrollment boundary to offset over-enrollment at other area schools and supplement the loss of Meadowlark
enrollment due to the Buena Vista kindergarten. She did not want to see the kindergarten become a divisive issue.

Superintendent Russell reminded the board that he indicated three years ago that co-location did not work, but Meadowlark and Buena Vista parents had assured the district that there were no problems. He said the kindergarten was a wedge issue, but Buena Vista needed one now and he supported the recommendation because he did not have another solution to the problem. Buena Vista should not be the only elementary school or immersion program without a kindergarten.

Board Vice Chair Beth Gerot said she supported deferring board action, but agreed with Superintendent Russell that every one of the district’s elementary schools should have a kindergarten.

Mr. Torrey suggested that a modular unit from elsewhere in the district could be moved to the Meadowlark/Buena Vista site to provide additional space.

Board Member Anne Marie Levis said she supported a Buena Vista kindergarten and hoped Principal Cuadros could resolve the outstanding issues and concerns.

Principal Cuadros said he was exploring options for adding capacity at the site, but associated site impacts would need to be addressed with both school staffs.

Board members indicated they would be willing to defer action on a Buena Vista kindergarten if it did not impact the school choice lottery process.

Mr. Smith stated that the matter would be referred to leadership to determine whether it should be taken up at the first or second meeting in January 2010.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION (continued)

Receive a Report on Eugene Comprehensive Lands Assessment

The City of Eugene is conducting an assessment of residential, industrial and commercial lands, as well as non-employment lands (e.g., parks, open space). This study, called the Eugene Comprehensive Lands Assessment (ECLA), includes an inventory of buildable lands within the City’s Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), an estimate of the need for land for residential uses and for non-residential uses (primarily commercial and industrial, but also public), and a determination of whether the City has sufficient land within the UGB to meet the estimated residential and non-residential needs.

Lisa Gardner, City of Eugene Planning Director, provided an overview of the ECLA project, which would help to inform the development of a long-range vision for the community. She introduced Jason Dedrick from the City of Eugene Planning and Development staff to make the presentation.

Mr. Dedrick used a slide presentation to illustrate the ECLA process and timeline. He said the process was initiated by House Bill 3337, which directed the cities of Eugene and Springfield to determine their land needs over the next 20 years and then establish separate UGBs by February 2011. He explained how lands were classified in order to determine what was buildable. He said preliminary results indicated that approximately 2,700 acres were vacant and
buildable and illustrated the locations of those parcels on a map, noting that much of the
developable residential land was on the east and south sides of town, while commercial and
industrial lands tended to be in the west and northwest areas.

Mr. Smith commented that the board had discussed the impact of housing costs in the
community on district enrollments. Ms. Gardner agreed that housing affordability was a factor
and it was important to maintain the right mix of housing stock in order to keep schools healthy
and vibrant. The City’s policy choices affect the affordability of housing.

Mr. Dedrick said the projected population for 2030 was 211,000 at a growth rate of slightly less
than one percent annually. That would require 15,000 additional dwelling units over the 20-year
period and current vacant land could provide for about half of that; additional land would be
needed. He listed the policy issues that would be examined, including the mix and density of
housing, affordability, redevelopment and changes to building height and density.

Mr. Dedrick said that similar assessments would determine the need and capacity for
employment, public and semi-public lands. He said School District 4J did not currently project a
need for land for new facilities by 2030, but the district might want to determine at some point
whether the data generated through the ECLA project impacted that need. He said the City
Council had adopted a resolution that the City’s 2030 land need would be within the range of
1,500 to 3,000 acres and work would continue to refine that range as land inventories were
completed. He emphasized the importance of community involvement in determining a vision
for the future.

Ms. Gardner said staff was developing a framework for a broad community engagement
process to help people work toward common goals. Mr. Dedrick invited the board to participate
as a stakeholder in the community process and provide input on issues such as facility needs,
housing for families with children, location of housing growth, along with broader community
values.

Mr. Torrey appreciated the ECLA presentation and felt it was helpful to the board in
understanding the implications for the district of land use decisions. He hoped the ECLA
process would keep the board and the district informed about and engaged in land use policy
decisions.

Ms. Levis asked how the board could help with ECLA’s community engagement process. Ms.
Gardner said the board was regarded as a community partner in a comprehensive discussion of
all aspects of future growth. She said City planning staff was working closely with district staff
and the board would be updated on the ECLA process in future presentations. Mr. Dedrick
added that the board could be engaged in the process at whatever level it wished.

Ms. Walston asked if the City of Coburg was a factor in the ECLA process. Ms. Gardner said
Coburg was not part of ECLA, but was a part of regional metropolitan planning activities and
would be affected by the land use decisions made by other jurisdictions in Lane County.

**ITEMS FOR ACTION AT THIS MEETING**

**Elect Board Vice Chair**

Beth Gerot is resigning from her position as Board Vice Chair effective January 1, 2010, when
she will begin her term as President of the Oregon School Boards Association.
MOTION: Mr. Torrey, seconded by Ms. Walston, nominated Alicia Hays to serve as vice chair for the remainder of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2010.
VOTE: The motion passed unanimously; 7:0.

CONSENT GROUP – ITEMS FOR ACTION

Approve Board Meeting Minutes

The superintendent recommended approval of the minutes from the November 18, 2009, regular board meeting. A copy of the minutes was included in the board packet.

MOTION: Ms. Levis, seconded by Ms. Walston, moved to approve the consent item.
VOTE: The motion passed unanimously; 7:0.

COMMENTS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS BY INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS

Ms. Walston reported on her visits to charter schools as part of their certification renewal process and the first meeting of the Graduation Requirements Committee. She attended the Poverty Institute in Portland and one of the speakers focused on education and the achievement gap.

Board Member Jennifer Geller attended the EEA legislative breakfast and said the next few weeks were a critical period for educating the community about measures 66 and 67 and what it would mean to schools if those measures failed. She cited figures that illustrated the dramatic costs of disinvestment in education.

Mr. Torrey noted that recent federal legislation to stimulate new jobs included a section related to infrastructure for schools. He asked staff to review the list of projects related to rehabilitating, refurbishing and remodeling district facilities and determine if there were opportunities to seek federal funding.

Ms. Hays congratulated the Sheldon High School football team on winning the State 6A Championship.

Ms. Levis remarked that the school district provided a safety net for many students and hoped the efforts would be recognized and supported by the community. She planned to provide board members with information she had recently obtained related to childhood obesity and thanked Ms. Gerot for distributing an article about diversity and discrimination. She encouraged everyone to read it.

Ms. Gerot reported that she had participated in a panel discussion on the impact of advertising that children were exposed to from birth through their teens. She attended the National School Boards Association (NSBA) regional meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, that included presentations on the Race to the Top process, immigration law and public education. She was hosting a meeting between Rep. Phil Barnhart and South Eugene High School students on December 17.

Mr. Smith thanked Ms. Gerot for her ten years of leadership on the board as chair or vice chair.
ADJOURN

Mr. Smith adjourned the meeting at 9:05 p.m.

_____________________________   _____________________________
George Russell     Craig Smith
Superintendent     Board Chair

(Recorded by Lynn Taylor)

Attachments to Official Minutes:
1. Race to the Top Grant Materials
2. Superintendent’s Student Advisory Committee Minutes – December 8, 2009
4. Eugene Comprehensive Lands Assessment Materials
5. Confirmation of Resignation as Board Vice Chair from Beth Gerot