MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 4J, LANE COUNTY, OREGON

August 1, 2007

Meeting Convened

The Board of Directors of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a regular meeting on August 1, 2007, at 7 p.m., 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 July 27, 2007, and published in The Register-Guard on July 30, 2007.

ROLL CALL

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

STAFF:
George Russell, Superintendent of Schools and District Clerk
Tom Henry, Deputy Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer
Barbara Bellamy, Chief of Staff and Director of Communications

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:
None present.

MEDIA:
KRVM

OTHER:
Jim Hale
Merri Steele, Eugene Education Association Representative
Paul Duchin, Eugene Education Association Representative
David Piercy, Facilitator of Work Session on the Shaping 4J’s Future Think Tank Report
Richard Margerum, University of Oregon, Think Tank Facilitator
Think Tank Members - Jim Carlson, Dr. Virginia Thompson, Serafina Clark, Virginia Farkas, Gerry Gaydos, Emilio Hernandez, and Chuck Forster

REGULAR MEETING

Call to Order, Roll Call, and Flag Salute

Board Member Charles Martinez, Jr. called the meeting of the 4J School Board to order.

Those present saluted the flag.
Agenda Review

There was no discussion.

Introduction of Guests and Superintendent’s Report

Superintendent George Russell reported that he, Board Member Beth Gerot, and several others had just returned from a Public Education Leadership Project (PELP) program at Harvard. He would report more at the board retreat in September.

Mr. Russell went over items in the red folder, including an article from The Boston Globe and an article from Education Week about the PELP program. He also mentioned an e-mail that had gone out previously about reinstatement of Lane Transit District’s funding for school bus passes for the 2007-08 school year.

Comments by Student Representatives

No student representatives were present.

Items Raised by the Audience

Jim Hale, 1715 Linnea Avenue, said he hoped to read the entire Shaping 4J’s Future report soon. While he supported equity and justice for all as an important goal, he feared the district was rapidly moving from being a district offering choice to parents to a district of no choice. He disagreed with the idea of neighborhood schools because he felt communities of this size did not have neighborhoods. He wanted the district to infuse additional funds, energy and staffing into schools with languishing enrollment. He appreciated the work of the Think Tank, but thought the recommendations were heading in the wrong direction.

Mr. Hale said he had asked for a dual Spanish immersion program, one of the recommendations in the report, years ago, and now he felt the district needed two such programs. He disagreed with the Think Tank’s assertion that the quality of teachers was most important and felt technology was more important to a “post-Nintendo” generation of parents. He advocated more individualized computer instruction instead of what he called the industrial model the district had now, expecting a teacher to deal with a roomful of students with different needs where no child was left behind.

Comments by Employee Groups

Jill Simmons, chapter president of Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) and Zone 4 director, spoke about the recent decisions of the Oregon School Boards Association (OSBA). She said OSBA had recently announced a 15.04% increase in the health insurance plans provided to school district employees around the state, effective October 1. She said this came on the heels of an OSBA decision to dissolve its Health Insurance Trust and transfer the remaining $35 million in reserves to its general fund. She said OSEA had filed objections on behalf of all OSEA members. In the past, OSBA had used the reserves to buy down rate increases, but not this time, she said, adding that the increase would mean an additional $90 per month expense for the district’s classified employees.

Ms. Simmons said Steve Araujo, OSEA’s executive director, had called the OSBA’s refusal to use the reserves to offset insurance increases unethical and had urged school districts to drop
their memberships in OSBA. She found the superintendent’s recommendation that 4J continue its membership troubling, since the sole purpose of the trust had been providing health coverage for employees. She urged the board to drop its membership until reserve funds were returned to the districts from which they had been derived.

Merri Steele and Paul Duchin, co-chairs of the Eugene Education Association (EEA), welcomed Jim Torrey to the board. Mr. Duchin encouraged a board settlement with the OSEA and commented that they shared many of the same sentiments expressed by Ms. Simmons regarding the reserve account.

Ms. Steele said they were impressed with the Think Tank’s report and appreciated the hard work that had gone into it. She commented that the report had begun a process of looking at areas that needed to be addressed. Mr. Duchin said they had shared their concerns about the report at a strategic planning meeting that afternoon and were confident about the district’s completing the process with the staff and the public. He added that teachers were still most important, but they also supported technology.

ITEMS FOR ACTION AT THIS MEETING

Administer the Oaths of Office

The superintendent administered the oaths of office to Alicia Hays (Position 1), Craig Smith (Position 4), Jim Torrey (Position 5), and Yvette Webber-Davis (Position 7) for the term July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2011.

Organize the Board of Directors for the 2007 – 2008 School Year

Elect Board Officers

MOTION: Ms. Gerot, seconded by Mr. Smith, nominated Dr. Martinez to serve as chair of the board for the 2007-08 school year.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously, 7:0.

MOTION: Mr. Smith, seconded by Dr. Webber-Davis, nominated Ms. Gerot to serve as vice-chair for the school year.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously, 7:0.

Authorize the Chair and Vice Chair to Sign for the District During the 2007-2008 Fiscal Year

MOTION: Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Hays, moved to authorize the chair and vice chair to sign for the district during the current fiscal year.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously, 7:0.

Consider National School Boards Association and Oregon School Boards Association Membership for Fiscal Year 2007 – 2008 and the Legal Assistance Trust Dues

Mr. Smith said he shared the concerns expressed by Ms. Simmons about the OSBA’s decision to dissolve its Health Insurance Trust and transfer the remaining $35 million in reserves to its general fund. He noted that it was clear from an IRA ruling that the trustees had the legal
authority to act as they had, but he was troubled that the trustees acted on behalf of OSBA’s financial interests rather than the beneficiaries of the trust.

Dr. Martinez asked Mr. Smith and Ms. Gerot, given their experience with OSBA, what additional sources of leverage were available on such a core issue. Mr. Smith’s perception was that OSBA did not care much about 4J’s dues, that $10,823 was a drop in the bucket. He felt the financial impact would have no leverage at all, unless a number of districts chose to drop out.

Ms. Gerot said in the years she had been on the OSBA board, she had seen dramatic changes in which the organization viewed districts, with the new executive director and major staff changes. She said there had been much more focus on student achievement and looking at ways to help board members strengthen their leadership around student achievement. She saw some real benefits going forward that the district could derive. Her way had always been to work within organizations around things she believed in, and she did not believe one could make changes within an organization from outside.

Ms. Hays echoed frustration around the OSBA’s action, and she agreed that it was difficult to influence organizations from the outside.

Dr. Martinez said he hung his optimism on Ms. Gerot’s continued courage and involvement in OSBA.

Mr. Forrest wondered if any other districts were interested in getting more of an explanation of what was going on and why. He noted that in the short time he had been on the board, the subject of paying annual dues had come up three times, and each time the board seemed less enthusiastic about paying them.

Superintendent Russell called attention to a letter included in board packets from the Astoria School District to OSBA, asking for a reconsideration of its decision.

Dr. Webber-Davis commented that she had participated in new board training offered by OSBA and found it to be very beneficial, especially in terms of legal issues. She had an opportunity to meet board members from around the state and had found that not everyone was happy with OSBA initiatives, yet had found board development beneficial.

**MOTION:** Ms. Gerot, seconded by Ms. Hays, made a motion to pay the OSBA annual membership fee of $10,823 and the Legal Assistance Trust dues of $4,000 for the 2007-2008 school year.

**VOTE:** The vote was 6-1, with Mr. Smith opposing.

**CONSENT GROUP - ITEMS FOR ACTION**

**Approve Special Procurement of Digital Video Surveillance Systems for Transportation Services**

Staff requested a special procurement with Apollo Video Technology of digital video surveillance equipment for school buses under Board Policy DJC, Special Procurements (I)(E)(3)(a), which states, “Efficient utilization of existing equipment or supplies requires the acquisition of compatible equipment, supplies, or services.”

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On June 21, 2006, the board approved a contract with Apollo Video Technology of Bellevue, Washington, based on a competitive process, to provide the district with digital cameras and recorders with wireless capability for school buses. A contract for $414,668 was completed March 31, 2007.

Components installed in 86 district buses included digital video cameras with microphones, digital video recorders and wireless transmitters. Transportation was also equipped with antennas, appropriate hardware and software to remotely access the video recorders.

The purchase of additional equipment would be needed as new buses were purchased, maintenance issues arose, and replacement items were required. Installing compatible equipment would promote the efficient use and maintenance of the surveillance system. The estimated cost of this equipment was $5,000 per bus.

The superintendent recommended approval of a special procurement with Apollo Video Technology for the purchase of additional and replacement equipment for the digital video surveillance systems currently installed in district school buses.

**Approve Grant Application: Eugene Middle School Mentoring Project**

Staff in the Instruction Department submitted a $211,203 grant application to the U.S. Department of Education. The Eugene Middle School Mentoring Project is a consortium school-based mentoring project with two community-based partners: Eugene Public Library and Eugene Delta Rotary. The goal was to expand and enhance a successful pilot middle school mentoring project so that at least 200 students were served by Year 3, with the goal of increasing student participation and ability to benefit from school. The project targeted students of greatest need from troubled home environments at risk of educational failure or delinquency. Mentors would meet with students weekly at the middle schools during the lunch hour and at the Eugene Library in the summer.

The library would provide a summer meeting place and summer activities; the Rotary would provide mentors and help with recruitment. The project included procedures for mentor recruitment, screening, matching, monitoring, and training, as well as literacy activities. It was based on research findings that indicated students in successful 12-month mentoring relationships bond to school and improve grades and attendance. Management would be provided by a qualified project director, project coordinator, part-time site coordinators, and an Advisory Board.

The superintendent recommended approval of the grant application.

**Approve Ratification of CIP Contract Awards**

On September 18, 2002, the Board of Directors affirmed the 1993 District policy for delegating Contract Award authority for Bond Funded CIP contracts of $500,000 or less to the Superintendent, or designee, subject to subsequent ratification by the board. The designee was Jon Lauch, Director of Facilities and Transportation. Contracts in excess of $500,000 will continue to require board approval. The purpose of the board item was to summarize all CIP contract award activity requiring a formal bid or formal competitive selection and for the board to ratify those awards that have been made by authorized staff since the last ratification.
The summary sheet in the board packet identified all contracts that have been awarded as of the status date indicated in accordance with delegated authority. The summary also identified who awarded the project and would indicate board ratification data of said award as applicable.

The CIP management staff would continue to provide the board with Contract Award Status updates for ratification, pursuant to School Board Policy DI, Capital Improvement Contracts Financed by Bond Levy Funds (previously Policy 6610.5).

The superintendent recommended ratification of awards for CIP GO Bond funded projects as indicated on the summary sheet.

**Approve Personnel Items**

The superintendent recommended approval of the personnel items included in the packet, covering employment, resignations, and other routine personnel matters. (See attached).

**MOTION:** Ms. Gerot, seconded by Mr. Smith, moved to approve the consent items.

**VOTE:** The motion passed unanimously, 7:0.

**ITEMS FOR ACTION AT A FUTURE MEETING**

**Approve a Recommendation for the Shaping 4J’s Future Community Involvement Process**

Ms. Bellamy noted that the board would make a decision at the August 15 board meeting regarding the process for taking Shaping 4J’s Future to the public. The superintendent would prepare a recommendation regarding what options should be carried forward for discussion with the community this fall and the scope of the community engagement process, and the board would have the opportunity to discuss the Think Tank recommendations and decide which ones to move forward for community discussion this fall.

**CONDUCT A WORK SESSION ON THE SHAPING 4J’S FUTURE THINK TANK REPORT**

Facilitator David Piercy introduced the process for going through Shaping 4J’s Future: Report and Recommendations of the 4J Think Tank. He emphasized that no strategic decisions would be made until winter. He pointed out that the Think Tank came up with a number of recommendations by consensus, so there were differences of opinion. He noted that the issues were potentially huge ones for the district, and continued debate could be expected.

Mr. Piercy stressed that the work session would focus on questions board members wanted answered before taking action August 15. At that time, Superintendent Russell would make recommendations about what issues would be moved forward into the public engagement process.

Dr. Rich Margerum, chair of the University of Oregon’s Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management Program (PPPM) and head of the UO team working with the Think Tank, reviewed the strategic planning process and the process for the work session. He reiterated that board members were being asked to get any clarification they needed from Think Tank members and to ask questions.
Think Tank members present introduced themselves: Jim Carlson, Dr. Virginia Thompson, Serafina Clark, Virginia Farkas, Gerry Gaydos, Emilio Hernandez, and Chuck Forster. Five members, Susan Ban, Marilyn Klug, Steve Korth, Charis McGaughy, and Hugh Prichard, were unable to attend.

Dr. Margerum asked Think Tank members to share “aha” moments they had had during their process.

Mr. Forster’s “aha” was recognizing the changing demographics in the community and the impact on the school district, including increases in Title I students, youth of color and special needs students and the limited resources available to address the achievement gap. He also commented about the impact of school choice on the achievement gap.

Dr. Hernandez expressed surprise that the district had arrived at this point so late. He felt the changes in community demographics had been known, but people had not wanted to look at them. He felt the community was in for a long duration of trying to deal with issues over the next eight years.

Mr. Carlson did not feel the community was aware of the magnitude of the demographic change, especially with the Latino population. From his long experience with land use planning in city government, he felt people had a static model of what change looked like, believing if the population was growing, the youth population was also growing, which was not true. He noted that Eugene had not been producing a lot of low-cost housing attractive to families with children, meaning the city had fewer and fewer children per household. The bigger “aha” for him was the burgeoning special needs population in the district. He felt that narrowing the achievement gap would require holistic thinking.

Mr. Smith noted that the escalating value of land and housing in Eugene was a pretty recent development. He wondered if kids eligible for reduced lunch would be in the district 10 years from now.

Mr. Carlson thought they would be in the district, because of a large quantity of existing housing around River Road Elementary School and Cesar Chavez Elementary School that was fairly low-cost, affordable housing. He felt Veneta, Bethel and Springfield were getting many families with enough money to buy a house, and Eugene had an increasing concentration of renters.

Dr. Hernandez observed that the Latino population was young, and the influx would be hitting the school district, the state, and the nation in the next eight years.

Mr. Smith wondered whether city policies might be having a negative effect on the district in terms of student population growth and the mix of kids.

Dr. Hernandez said recent studies indicated that not all Latinos were poor. He noted that the Latino population with middle and higher incomes was growing.

Dr. Martinez said historically, the magnitude of change had been under-predicted, because the algorithms used to project population predicted linearity, while the growth in special education, ELL and Latino populations was not linear. His best guess was that the district might be under-predicting.
Mr. Carlson saw a bimodality, with new housing construction at a very high end, and a concentration of low-income people who were here for services and jobs. He felt the middle-income people were going out to Veneta and Junction City.

Dr. Thompson found the complexity of the issues and the way they intertwined with one another surprising. She commented that self-interest tended to perpetuate both thinking and practice, and if the district was really serious about education for all children, it would need to take a holistic view. She said incremental change was certainly needed, but the district also needed to move more rapidly than in the past.

Dr. Margerum read written comments from Mr. Korth, who was shocked by some of the data about dropping enrollment and the high level of increasing needs for students. He hoped the Think Tank’s collective recommendations would help address the existing inequity within schools and their ability to address needs for all students.

Dr. Margerum thanked the Think Tank members for their dedication and hard work. He noted that the Think Tank recommended that some options not go into the public process, many options would go forward into the public process, and that others would be more appropriately handled through internal planning. He outlined six guiding principles that emerged in the process.

Mr. Smith said it would help him, especially in regard to the first three guiding principles, if the Think Tank would delineate what recommendations would increase overall student achievement, and how achievement would be enhanced.

Dr. Margerum said those recommendations usually came back to best practice research, especially regarding school size. Mr. Smith felt it would be helpful to use those words.

Mr. Carlson noted that with Principle 5, the group felt the best practices evidence had not been strong enough to warrant changes. He added that achievement and equity had been underlying themes at every meeting.

Mr. Piercy led the group through the list of Think Tank recommendations beginning on Page v. of the Executive Summary.

Regarding Recommendation 1, Mr. Smith wanted a clear statement regarding building and school capacity. Dr. Martinez wanted to underscore Mr. Smith’s point, noting that distinctions between the school and the site were subtle, but important.

Ms. Farkas noted that all best practices research indicated that schools could not provide ELL or special needs services if they were smaller than 350 students. Mr. Carlson added that this recommendation would be one of the most impactful.

Dr. Martinez wondered if this were an area where the Think Tank had consensus. Dr. Thompson said they had agreed on this.

Mr. Smith expressed concern about how the district could bring the public up-to-speed on this issue so that citizens could have a meaningful say.

Dr. Martinez said the district had a track record of engaging with the community on complex issues.
Regarding Recommendation 2.2, Dr. Webber-Davis asked how long the Bethel and Portland K-8 models had been in existence. Superintendent Russell said five years for Bethel; Mr. Carlson said Portland had just begun the transition. Dr. Thompson wanted to underscore her minority opinion. She felt in schools where K-8 made sense, it should not be taken off the table as an option.

Regarding Recommendation 3, Mr. Forrest wanted to know what the current middle school sizes were. Mr. Carlson said the implication was that if the district considered rebuilding Roosevelt, it would build smaller now. He said Roosevelt, with an enrollment of 673, was the only middle school with over 600 students, because people were choosing to go there.

Dr. Martinez wondered how strong the sentiment regarding the maximum was. Ms. Farkas said the group had looked at the projected enrollment and divided that by the number of middle schools in the district. Mr. Carlson said the Think Tank recognized that the two new elementary schools, Chavez and Holt, were bigger than the recommendation, but they seemed to be successful at building a school-within-a-school model.

Superintendent Russell wondered where this recommendation fit in terms of principles. Mr. Carlson said the Think Tank had been trying to improve equity by reducing the number of free and reduced lunch students in the other middle schools to balance the number of other students choosing to attend Roosevelt. Ms. Farkas added that flattening enrollment among the schools would pave the way for more good programs at each one.

Superintendent Russell wondered if the same goal could be accomplished with six schools with 800 students instead of eight schools with 600 students each. Ms. Farkas said best practices research said 800 students was a good size for middle schools.

Dr. Hernandez noted that the Think Tank wanted to start a trend with the middle schools in equalizing the number of free and reduced lunch students among the schools.

Regarding Recommendation 4.3, Mr. Forrest wondered if the Think Tank looked at the cost of building a new high school. Superintendent Russell said new schools had been costing $40-50 million in the last few years. Ms. Farkas said money drove that recommendation. Mr. Forrest wanted that fact added to the report. Dr. Thompson said she had gone into the discussions favoring three high schools, but had changed her mind.

Superintendent Russell asked for a description of career academies. Mr. Forster said they would be designed around careers, with an integrated academic program and career training. Mr. Carlson said because of his work of trying to site community parks and hospitals, he knew it was hard to find large pieces of buildable land in the city. Ms. Farkas said the Think Tank had decided the subject needed further exploration. She said the Rachel Carson School for Natural Resources was probably the best example in the district.

Regarding Recommendation 4.4, Mr. Smith wondered if the data supported smaller learning communities in high schools. Mr. Carlson said students had closer connections with their teachers. Ms. Farkas noted that the Churchill High School principal had made a presentation to the group.

Regarding Recommendation 5, Dr. Margerum noted that two alternative schools on the same site could be combined to meet the size recommendation. Superintendent Russell noted that theoretically, with this recommendation, alternative schools could grow to 350 students. Mr. Smith commented that that would be a dramatic change.
Regarding Recommendation 6.1, Mr. Smith asked whether the Think Tank discussed tuition-based full-day kindergarten. Mr. Carlson said the group believed the trend was toward offering full-day kindergarten, but it had not discussed tuition.

Regarding Recommendation 6.2, Mr. Piercy commented that the State of Oregon had just taken action to expand pre-kindergarten programs dramatically.

Regarding Recommendation 7.2, Dr. Martinez asked for a clarification of “limited benefit.” He was told it meant the Think Tank did not recommend having the public deliberate about the issue.

Regarding Recommendation 8, Dr. Thompson expressed her minority viewpoint that the issue of a Spanish dual-immersion school should be taken to the public. Mr. Smith asked if the Think Tank was recommending a district-wide Spanish dual-immersion program. Mr. Carlson said the thought was to put it in an area with a higher concentration of Spanish-speaking students to make it easier for that side of the dual-immersion to occur.

Regarding Recommendation 9.2, Superintendent Russell wondered if the recommendation implied that the community would not weigh-in on one-for-one laptops. Dr. Thompson considered that part of infrastructure, which she felt needed to be defined both as what was built into the building, as well as what plugs into, including any of the hardware, laptops, etc., and not the operational part of it. She said the Think Tank wanted to address the inequity in what some schools could acquire that had resulted in the affluent schools having everything they needed and others lagging behind. Ms. Farkas said the consensus was that some schools were way behind, and there were gaps between schools. Dr. Thompson added that the have-nots were way behind in technology, as well as in other areas.

Regarding Recommendation 10, Superintendent Russell wondered if there were other places that would open up a discussion on the changing demographics and the multi-faceted impact on the district. He wondered how to make sure people understood the implications. Mr. Carlson noted that the Think Tank had a basic briefing on these issues in its first three meetings, and he felt public education around these topics was equally important.

Ms. Farkas believed this to be critical. She felt ELL and Title I needed to be front and center in the public process before discussions of school size, because those issues drove the school size recommendations. Dr. Thompson commented that there was a fine line, and she wondered at what level public involvement about instruction was valuable.

Mr. Forrest felt public awareness of the issues involving the district’s shrinking enrollment and the proportional growth of the ELL and Title I populations was key. Dr. Martinez suggested asking whether there were compelling issues where public input was needed. Superintendent Russell felt that educating the public about how “significant aha’s” led to specific conclusions was critical. Dr. Margerum believed that was an important point.

Dr. Thompson noted that Mr. Korth had brought up the importance of earlier screening very strongly in the Think Tank meetings.

Ms. Hays wondered if there was any information available on income level and special needs students. Dr. Hernandez said now that people realized they could take children out of their home for help, the income levels were going down. Ms. Hays asked for information about that.
Regarding Recommendation 11, Superintendent Russell wondered why the Think Tank did not conclude that more public discussion was needed around its recommendation that no school building should have more than 50% of its students qualifying for Title I, free and reduced lunch. Ms. Farkas said that would come up more in the discussion of boundaries. Mr. Forrest said the issue felt buried to him. Dr. Martinez commented that the issue had big implications, not to mention what the implementation would look like.

Superintendent Russell did not see how the issue could be separated from other strategies, such as boundaries, school size, enrollment, etc., because of its large implications in those discussions. Ms. Farkas said this was why discussions came back to wanting every school to have something so great about it that no one wanted to leave, since most of the schools with more than 50% Title I students had lost a significant portion of their non-Title I students. Dr. Hernandez added that if all schools provided equal programs, people would stop running.

Mr. Forrest said if running were stopped, other factors would have to be pushed to balance. Dr. Martinez noted that the problem could not be solved by shifting from one school to another. Ms. Farkas said the district might shift schools to different locations that drew more students.

Superintendent Russell said he did not see a way in which the district could avoid talking about this in the public process. Mr. Carlson said the Think Tank had assumed there would be public involvement in creating a new policy.

Regarding Recommendation 12, Mr. Forrest wondered what the real estate value of school sites meant in this context and whether if a school were worth more, that might be a determining factor in closing it. Dr. Thompson said she felt it would, if all other factors were equal. Mr. Smith asked for language that made it more clear that proposed changes to the policy were written in italics.

Regarding Recommendation 15, Mr. Smith commented that these recommendations would limit choice across the board. He said it would be nibbling at dramatic changes in the district’s culture. Mr. Carlson noted that Mr. Prichard had been a strong voice for site-based decision making if outcome could be measured. He had commented that it would offer flexibility, but with accountability for achieving desired outcomes.

Ms. Farkas said Mr. Prichard had wanted to make sure innovation and creativity were not lost in an effort to standardize, but she added that some of the innovations and creativity had created inequity.

Regarding Recommendation 16, Dr. Thompson said she would have gone a step further, because not all staff were created equal. She said there had been a flight of quality teachers as well as students and parents from some schools.

Mr. Russell said this report had far exceeded his expectations, and he could not thank the Think Tank members enough. He was impressed with how the group identified guiding principles and carried them throughout their work. He noted that board members carried a big burden on their shoulders, dealing with a complex situation and many issues.

Dr. Martinez expressed the board’s appreciation for the Think Tank’s work.

Ms. Gerot felt the guiding principles were wonderful and wanted them front and center as the board went to the public as an entry into looking at the deep issues involved.
Dr. Ed Weeks from PPPM passed around handouts relating to the public engagement process. He noted that it did not take long to identify three salient publics: The teachers and other staff; the parents of current and prospective students; and the general public. He said this project was one of the most challenging he had seen, in terms of enabling participants to evaluate alternatives and come to a considered judgment, because of the complexities involved.

Mr. Forrest wondered what would happen if after engaging the public, the board chose not to listen, for example if the public was split 51%-49% on some issues.

Dr. Weeks stated that in his organization’s experience, there was much greater agreement and respect for the process and the board. He said where it became a problem was when a board chose to ignore strong public sentiment.

Dr. Martinez felt there would be significant polarization around some of the issues on the table. He felt expectation management was necessary to avoid the risk of decisions being made in a public forum.

Dr. Hernandez commented that the national climate around immigration would create polarization, and the process might not be pretty.

Mr. Forrest said he had already been getting comments from “Not in My School (NIMS)” people.

Dr. Weeks said the district needed to be concrete so that people knew what they were expressing their preferences for.

Mr. Forrest did not want to spend a lot of money trying to get a public consensus, but he wanted education so that people have an understanding of why the issues were so murky.

Dr. Webber-Davis wondered how to put core issues before the public. She noted that the board would be seeking an indication of community values and how to put those in its deliberations.

Dr. Weeks conceded that it was a difficult problem, noting that the rubber met the road when stepping away from values to practical policies, which was why he felt taking specific policies to the public was important.

Dr. Martinez expressed concern about the vulnerable voices that would not be represented. Dr. Weeks said PPPM’s work in Menlo Park and Sacramento suggested otherwise. In both places, he said low-income Latino populations had turned out in numbers to participate.

Dr. Webber-Davis wanted a plan-full approach for outreach to the community and how the district would overcome obstacles to participation.

Mr. Piercy stressed that the board needed to demonstrate its willingness to listen with what went out to the public.

COMMENTS BY INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS

Ms. Gerot reported on her trip to Harvard with Superintendent Russell and others to attend a training in leadership around change. She said tonight’s discussion had made the trip relevant. She indicated there were four strands in the training: Focus on the instructional core;
organizational coherence; team leadership; and regional connecting. She shared the titles of
two books she had found especially helpful, *Leadership on the Line* and *Change Leadership.*

Ms. Gerot shared questions she felt were particularly relevant to the board’s retreat in
September: What do students need to know and do? What would success look like? What do
we mean by rigor, relevance, relationships, and results? She noted that the challenges 4J was
facing were becoming more and more like those facing larger urban districts.

**ADJOURN**

Mr. Martinez adjourned the meeting at 10:10 p.m.

______________________________  ______________________________
George Russell  Charles Martinez, Jr.
District Clerk  Board Chair

(Recorded by Susan Wulfekuhler)