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

September 19, 2007

The Board of Directors of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held an Executive Session at 6 p.m. and a regular meeting at 7 p.m. on September 19, 2007, 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 September 14, 2007, and published in The Register-Guard on September 17, 2007.

ROLL CALL

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

STAFF:
George Russell, Superintendent of Schools and District Clerk
Tom Henry, Deputy Superintendent & Chief Academic Officer
Wally Bryant, Associate Director of Human Resources
Ted Heid, Director of Labor Relations
Caroline Passerotti, Financial Analysis Manager

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 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 High School Services
Jon Lauch, Director of Facilities Management
Yvonne Curtis, Director of Student Achievement

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:
Natalie Harrison, Churchill High School
Zach Schneider-Lynch, IHS, All Campuses
Vivek Patel, North Eugene High School
Katie Melton, Sheldon High School
Noah Henry-Darwish, South Eugene High School

MEDIA:
KRVM
CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND FLAG SALUTE

Charles Martinez, Board Chair, called the meeting of the 4J School Board to order at 7 p.m.

Those present saluted the flag.

AGENDA REVIEW

There were no changes.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS AND SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Superintendent George Russell welcomed a roomful of guests and the new student representatives, noting that the board had met with them 45 minutes prior to the meeting. He said each board member should have received a copy of the book, Leadership on the Line. He related that the district’s new emergency notification system had already been used in a bomb threat at Cal Young Middle School.

COMMENTS BY STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

The student representatives for this year introduced themselves.

Katie Melton, a senior at Sheldon High School, is involved in student government, Teen Advocacy Council (TAC), National Honor Society (NHS) and International High School (IHS). She reported on Freshman Only Day, a pep rally and a Hello Assembly to welcome everyone back to school.

Noah Henry-Darwish, a senior at South Eugene High School, is also involved in student government, NHS, TAC, IHS, the school’s AIDS and Substance Abuse Program, as well as rowing for the crew team. He said student government had just started planning events for the year.

Zach Schneider-Lynch, IHS, All Campuses, a senior at South Eugene High School, is on the cross-country team, and is in many of the same groups as the other student representatives. Zach had no updates so far.

Natalie Harrison, a student at Churchill High School, is also in executive leadership. She reported that the school was planning its first home football game and kickoff dances.

Vivek Patel, a senior at North Eugene High School, plays lacrosse. He reported that the Small Schools Orientation had gone well, and an advisory is being held every Wednesday, with all grades getting together. He said all LINK leaders went to lower grades and the seniors went to the auditorium, where they learned about graduation requirements and other topics. Other grades learned how to prepare for graduation.

Dr. Martinez welcomed the representatives and said the board was very eager for their participation this year.

ITEMS RAISED BY THE AUDIENCE

Jan Hahn, 91966 Hwy. 99 S., a school secretary employed by the district for 22 years, commented that the board’s mantra had been “doing what was best for children” and asked if
they really meant it. She asked whose children they were talking about, children of administrators and teachers, who got a sizable raise that covered insurance premium increases, or children of the classified staff, who would have to make a choice between feeding their children, putting a roof over their head, or providing insurance. She said if the board did not pay the additional $200 cost, many of the classified staff would be forced to drop health insurance. She asked if that was what they called equity in 4J.

Michael White, 428 South 72nd, a parent of three school-age sons, a classified employee in 4J’s Transportation Department and an Oregon School Employees Association (OSA) Chapter 1 executive board member, asked the board to take another close look at the OSA contract proposal. He said the average annual salary of classified employees was $20,000 or less, and that many were unemployed during school breaks with little hope for finding temporary work for 10-12 weeks per year. He said many have to take what they get monthly and divide it over 12 months, then pay twice as much for insurance premiums to continue coverage over the summer. He said classified employees were only asking for fair treatment.

Patrick Munyon, 1560 Chasa, a long-term 4J employee and 4J parent, said as classified benefit coordinator that classified employees had worked very hard to contain medical costs, but many members were struggling with debt resulting from high deductibles and co-payments, prescription expenses or high payroll costs for insurance. He said classified employees knew skyrocketing medical costs were a national crisis, but only wanted to be treated fairly. He noted that other 4J employees were getting salary increases that would mitigate higher insurance costs, and classified employees were asking for the same treatment.

Cara Van Dusen, 1185 W. 15th, a CMC1 at Cesar Chavez Elementary, said she needed the support of her district to make sure she was not struggling financially to the point that it affected her ability to do her job. She loved her job and making a difference in children’s lives, but had been struggling financially because of higher insurance costs that ate into the money she had available to buy food and gas. She said many classified employees had had to make choices that affected their well-being and urged the district to make a contract decision that benefited everyone.

Kevin Hornbuckle, a bus driver, observed that the notion of employer-paid health care was disappearing, because it was unaffordable. He said the U.S. spent the most of any country in the world on health care, and yet the quality of the care was among the worst in the industrialized world. He criticized the Oregon School Boards Association, of which 4J is a member, and opposed Senate Bill 426 which creates a state insurance pool for school district employees.

Dr. Martinez thanked the speakers and community members in attendance, adding that the board cared greatly about the issues expressed.

COMMENTS BY EMPLOYEE GROUPS

Paul Duchin and Merri Steele, co-presidents of the Eugene Education Association (EEA), expressed delight that the district, especially Superintendent Russell, had encouraged schools to take part in diversity training. They also related their concern that the OSEA and the district had been unable to agree on a contract.

Mr. Duchin said the EEA had voted unanimously to support the OSEA and firmly believed all employee groups should have equal health coverage.
Jill Simmons, OSEA Chapter 1 president, said much of the community conversation about doing what was best for children had focused on the teacher-student relationship, but it was the support of classified employees in all their various roles that allowed teachers and students to be successful. She said OSEA members had sacrificed long enough and asked the district to treat them as equals in health care and providing for their families.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Receive an Update on the No-Idling (Motor Vehicles) Outreach

Jon Lauch, Director of Facilities Management, noted that the Transportation Department had a no-idling policy for school buses and the older exhaust systems on the entire fleet had been updated with particulate traps and oxidizers, funded by an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant. He said EPA had agreed to allow some of the remaining grant money to be used for a “No-Idling” outreach program in 4J elementary and middle schools.

Mr. Lauch introduced Dan Fuehring, safety specialist, by detailing his work for the district. Mr. Fuehring gave details about the outreach program that would encourage drivers dropping off or picking up students to shut off motor vehicles when idling for longer than 30 seconds. He said idling wastes one gallon of fuel per one hour of idling, and the exhaust emitted a large range of pollutants into the atmosphere. Mr. Fuehring said letters would be sent home with each elementary and middle school student, and staff members were speaking at parent meetings at every school about the initiative.

Board member Beth Gerot thanked Jon and Dan for their efforts and commented that many automobile emissions could be carcinogenic to children.

Receive an Update on the Tripod Project

Laurie Moses, Director of High School Services, gave an update on what had been done since she first introduced the Tripod Project at a February 2007 board meeting. The Tripod Project is a national consortium of schools and districts that have a shared interest in raising achievement for all students, while narrowing gaps among students from different racial, ethnic and social class backgrounds.

During March of 2007, over 4,000 high school students in Eugene completed a 40-minute Tripod Project student engagement survey administered by classroom teachers. On August 29, Ron Ferguson, Tripod Project Director and faculty member of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and Rob Ramsdell, President of FreshPond Education in Cambridge, Massachusetts, presented information about the project, along with district and school survey results, to teachers from 4J high schools. Ms. Moses said leadership teams at each high school had just begun analyzing their data in an effort to learn more about the student experience in their school, and she looked forward to updating the board on the results later in the year. She stressed that the project would not evaluate schools or teachers, but would gather data that would help in making decisions about how best to serve students.

Ms. Moses introduced Ellen Brunson-Newton, district coordinator of the project, who was working with school teams and high school administrators. Ms. Brunson-Newton related that attending a three-day conference about the Tripod Project with administrators in August had taught her that overall no schools stood out. She noted that there had been variations in all the schools. Beyond that, she said 4J high schools had higher percentages of student responses than averages from elsewhere in the country.
Ms. Brunson-Newton went over five student target engagement areas:
1. Felt trusting, safe and welcome in the school environment;
2. Behaved cooperatively and abided by school rules;
3. Embraced mastery goals more than socially comparative goals;
4. Worked diligently and remained resilient in response to setbacks; and
5. Achieved satisfaction based on effort and progress.

Ms. Brunson-Newton noted that the project provided reliable numbers in the students’ voice about how learning worked for them and listed examples of how the data might be used, such as anti-teasing programs and tweaking tardy policies. She said 72 percent of 4J students reported that peers were supportive of each other, compared to 50% elsewhere.

Board member Craig Smith wondered if the survey would be repeated with a different group of students. Ms. Moses was hopeful the project would prove so useful that it would be done again this spring with a different group of students. She said if all students in grades 9-12 were surveyed annually, it would give a good idea what each school’s climate was like and help with improvement in engaging students.

In response to a question from board member Jim Torrey, Ms. Moses said the focus groups were done with students. He asked if staff had considered doing the survey with exiting 8th-graders. Ms. Moses said some districts had chosen to do Tripod surveys in high schools, middle schools and elementary schools, but that came with a cost. She said administrators and teachers were very interested in this data.

Mr. Torrey would like to hear what the student representatives felt about the outcome of the research in the future.

Dr. Martinez observed that the actual information from projects to the board had been missing in the past, and he strongly encouraged staff to share the data with the board as it became available so that it could inform board policy.

CONSENT GROUP - ITEM FOR ACTION

Approve Grant Application: Smart Routes to School

Staff from Monroe Middle School submitted a $13,265 grant application to the Oregon Department of Transportation. The project would involve a two-year campaign to create a safer environment and encourage students, staff, and parents to select walking and/or biking as a transportation option. Monroe’s campaign would promote, educate, and reward students for choosing alternative transportation options. Additional energy would reduce campus-related vehicle speed and congestion, as well as offer bicycle and pedestrian safety education. Plans included teaming with other 4J schools, Monroe’s neighborhood association, and City of Eugene professionals.

Monroe also applied for the second half of the ODOT Smart Routes to School Grant. The second half of the grant would include infrastructure requests to upgrade Monroe’s bike and skateboard facilities. This portion of the grant application was in the review process.

The superintendent recommended approval of the grant application.

MOTION: Ms. Gerot, seconded by Mr. Smith, moved to approve the consent agenda.
VOTE: The motion passed unanimously, 6-0.
COMMENTS & COMMITTEE REPORTS BY BOARD MEMBERS

Board member Alicia Hays invited board members to attend a Commission on Children and Families public meeting October 4 on the commission’s comprehensive plan.

Mr. Torrey reported that he had attended a Head Start program event the previous week and had been surprised to hear that many immigrant families were unable to participate because both parents earned just enough to be over the income standard. He said there was a real concern that the ELL program might be negatively impacted because the children did not have access to Head Start, and he wondered if the district should develop a relationship that could assist families who made too much money for Head Start, but could not afford paid pre-school.

Board member Yvette Weber-Davis and Mr. Smith welcomed the new student representatives.

Ms. Gerot gave a preview of the board retreat on October 5 and 6 and encouraged other directors to read the resources provided to them prior to the retreat. She listed three questions she wanted them to consider as they read the material:
1. Faced with profound, rapid social and economic changes the district was experiencing, what did all students need to know and be able to do now and into the future?
2. Given that the schools were never designed for today’s world, how did teaching, learning and leadership need to change to ensure that all students had the skills they needed for work, college and citizenship?
3. What was the board’s leadership role in improving instruction?

Dr. Martinez reassured other members that he and Ms. Gerot had spent considerable time to make the retreat agenda doable. He said the board had a lot of work to do, and he and Ms. Gerot both had a strong desire to spend this precious time together.

Adjourn

Dr. Martinez adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

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George Russell                     Charles Martinez, Jr.
District Clerk                    Board Chair

(Recorded by Susan Wulfekuhler)

Following the regular board meeting, the board went back into Executive Session after a short break.

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).

Attachment to Official Minutes:
1. Grant Application: Smart Routes to School (Monroe Middle School)