

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

February 20, 2008

The Board of Directors of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a public hearing at 6 p.m. on February 20, 2008, at the Sheldon High School Cafeteria, 2455 Willakenzie Road, Eugene, Oregon. Notice of the meeting was mailed to the media and posted in the Education Center on February 15, 2008, and published in *The Register-Guard* on February 18, 2008.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS:

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

STAFF:

George Russell, Superintendent of Schools and District Clerk
Tom Henry, Deputy Superintendent & Chief Academic Officer
Barbara Bellamy, Chief of Staff and Communications Director
Larry Sullivan, Director of Educational Support Services
Laurie Moses, Director of High School Services
Yvonne Curtis, Director of Student Achievement
Kay Mehas, Director of School Services

MEDIA:

KRVM

CALL TO ORDER

Board Chair Charles Martinez called the meeting of the School District 4J Board of Directors to order. He noted that all board members were present.

AGENDA REVIEW

Dr. Martinez determined that there were no changes to the agenda.

PUBLIC HEARING

Superintendent's Report and Recommendations for Shaping 4J's Future

Dr. Martinez reviewed the order of the hearing, noting that a representative of each school affected by the superintendent's recommendations would speak first, followed by general testimony.

Annie Donahue, President of the Adams Parent-Teacher Association, said Adams School supported Superintendent Russell's support for differentiated staffing and urged the board to include mobility in the equation. She thanked the board for making preservation of central city schools a priority. She said Adams supported a boundary study given the time since the last study, and the superintendent's recommendation to consider historic community boundaries and sustainability as a basis for adjustments, including walking distances. She said the Adams community was saddened by the recommendation to close Harris Elementary School, which successfully served a range of students, while a school with a smaller, narrower student population was preserved.

Ms. Donahue then went on to describe Adams School and its programming, and emphasized its openness to all children.

Terri Monroe, Charlemagne French Immersion School Site Council, asked the board to make strategic changes that served long term needs, to preserve the integrity of the language immersion program, and to support changes that increased the diversity of the student body. Ms. Monroe felt there were advantages to moving the school to a site where there were adequate facilities to support student learning. She said the school had serious concerns about displacing Harris and hoped the district did not rush the process. The school was concerned about the timeline, which seemed inconsistent with a long-term strategic approach. She called for a more measured rollout that allowed the district to weigh progress for each step.

Ms. Monroe asked what evidence the district had that collocation would work between two alternative schools and called for a more detailed examination of the causes of tension created by collocation. Following that analysis, the board could determine whether collocation was viable or if the practice should be abandoned.

In regard to the relocation of Charlemagne, Ms. Monroe said that extended modular classrooms were not sustainable and constituted a temporary fix. Disjointed facilities did not contribute to an effective learning environment, and she feared the initial investment would be wasted when the need for permanent facilities was recognized. She suggested that the district could realize more for its Fox Hollow site by waiting for the real estate market to improve, which would allow for time to make sustainable upgrades for a new site for Charlemagne.

Ms. Monroe advocated for increasing transportation to support student choice using school buses and noted the support expressed for transportation by parents. She thought it could make a big difference for students wishing to attend Charlemagne school.

Anne Marie Levis, also representing Charlemagne French Immersion School, discussed the importance of preserving the integrity of the language immersion program and suggested that due to such things as differing learning materials, the efficiencies gained by collocation in many cases did not translate well for such programs. As a result of the alternative schools review, the school was looking at a full-time immersion program, which also did not lend itself to collocation. She said the school had been praised for its attempts to break down real and perceived barriers, but the process would take time. She discussed what the school had done to address those barriers, and asked the board to slow the process so the school could do more work in that regard.

Chris Valentine, a Coburg Elementary parent, noted the distance that students would have to travel if the school was closed, making them travel farther from their neighborhood than any other. In regard to cost savings, he said his analysis indicated the district would save less than

anticipated and the cost would be affected by the cost of bussing students to another school. He found one-tenth of one percent or less from closing Coburg School. He reviewed the district's financial review and found an increase of 12 FTE in administration and said classroom support services increased during that same period. If there was a two FTE reduction in overhead, the district would save the same amount as it would by closing the school. He said the school had many of the programs offered by the larger schools and also had special events opportunities and music education. Given the geographic separation, the concept of a small rural school should be part of the choice of the district. If the district closed Coburg, it would be closing something very special to the community.

South Eugene High School Principal Randy Bernstein said South Eugene High School (SEHS) recognized the need to maintain vital programs at all high schools and recognized the need for a viable student population. All schools needed to share in the shrinking enrollment that was projected for the next several years. SEHS was concerned about several of the recommendations, including recommendations related to student caps. He believed the bulk of student loss would be born by SEHS. He pointed out that SEHS was conveniently located to Lane Community College and the University of Oregon and people feared that limited enrollment would limit students' access to such opportunities. There was also concern about limiting student access to such programs as the performing arts.

Pat Avery, a SEHS Theater Arts Instructor, said performing arts were the hallmark of an SEHS education, and statistics demonstrated theater arts students outperformed other students. Student involvement in the arts was important. SEHS students competed at a natural level and were accepted into exclusive programs. He feared a loss of FTE would erode the program to a bare-bones program that did not provide students with the ability to compete. He said that the program was a significant reason students transferred to SEHS. Mr. Avery asked the district to assure the school that the program would not be reduced to a part-time program or that other schools programs would grow to the level of SEHS' program.

Mr. Bernstein said that such programs as theater arts attracted many students to the school. He said that an analysis of student demographics showed little disparity between current and home-school populations. South currently had higher populations of African-American, Asian, and Latino students than would be present if only neighborhood students attended. Parents were worried about what appeared to be the restriction of choice as opposed to the management of choice. However, he believed most people understood that given recent community demographic changes, some changes were called for.

Margie Kelly, a parent at Eastside and member of the site council, supported the superintendent's plan to place Eastside at the Harris building and co-located with Charlemagne. She thought the plan represented good stewardship of district resources, although she acknowledged the impact on Harris families and staff. She said the Eastside community supported small schools but in recognition of the reality of declining enrollments, the recommendation seemed appropriate. She believed that including the relocation of Eastside in the process should dispel the myth that a neighborhood school was being closed for an alternative school. She said neighborhood schools were changing to cope with the reality of declining enrollment and alternative schools were being placed in open buildings in a consistent response to the district's priorities. She expressed appreciation for the plan to leave a regional learning center at the Harris site for easier access to parents and students and to reach a wider range of learners than otherwise would be possible. It demonstrated the district's commitment to choice as well as to meeting the needs of a diverse student population. She spoke of the work the school did to make its educational experience more widely available to Eugene children. Ms. Kelly believed that the new location would allow the school to attract more diverse

families while keeping the school accessible for its current families. She went on to laud the work Eastside had done to create community and educate its students.

Michelle Mikkelsen, Edison Elementary Parent Council, commiserated with those schools recommended for closure. She said if the board accepted the superintendent's recommendation to close Harris School, Edison wanted Harris families to know their children would be welcomed. She thought the expansion of Edison's boundaries helped it to become a true neighborhood school. She asked the board to allow the school to honor its existing commitments to current transfer students and their siblings throughout their fifth grade graduation. She said that continuity was an important tool and the district's historic policy of keeping families together would be a valuable stabilizing tool in helping the community adjust to its new realities.

Phil Barnhart, House District 11, spoke of behalf on keeping Coburg School open. He said new housing would soon be built in Coburg because of the new wastewater collection system and treatment plant and the trend of declining enrollment would change because the population would grow rapidly. He suggested the school would close at precisely the time the community would begin to grow again and could support a school. The school to be located on the Kinney Loop site would be full of students from North Eugene and would not require students from Coburg to be full. He emphasized the unique community character of Coburg and said its own school was an important attribute for the community. He asked the board to keep the school open long enough to test his predictions. He believed the district might have to reopen the school if it closed it or deal with overcrowding at Kinney Loop. Mr. Barnhart acknowledged the difficult choices facing the board and believed the board would make the best decisions it could for the community's children. He thanked the board.

Julie Barneas, a teacher at Family School, and **Cailen Mills Ostweld**, a parent, expressed their support for the recommendation of Superintendent Russell's proposal to move Family School and expand a grade each year into the middle level. They believed the proposal offered the school some tremendous opportunities. They noted several advantages to the proposal, including the close-in commute, additional space for programming, continuity through an integrated family school in one space, and the provision of space for Chavez Elementary School to grow. Due to the commonalities between the Family School and the Arts and Technology Academy, they anticipated a smooth transition. They expressed concern about whether staff at the academy had the opportunity to provide feedback about the proposal, and questioned how specialists and staff would be shared between the two schools. They noted the modified Family School calendar and wondered how the two schools' calendars could be integrated and how staff would work with the different schedules. They noted the school's past requests to establish a kindergarten, which was said not to be possible because of space, and asked to initiate a kindergarten program with the move. They questioned what the middle school experience would look like and how it would be staffed and funded so both schools could continue to operate distinctly.

Remie Calalang, Harris School site council member, noted the core values identified by Superintendent Russell of equity, excellence, and choice, and said Harris Elementary exemplified those values. It was one of the most racially diverse school in the district and served a high percentage of students qualifying for a free lunch and ELL. It received a rating of "strong" on its state report card. She noted the staff and family efforts made to make students feel welcome. Families chose Harris because of strong academics, caring staff, and a diverse population, as well as for its innovations, such as all-day kindergarten. She noted the board goal of stakeholder engagement and suggested the process was happening too quickly, at odds

with that goal. The timeframe for soliciting feedback was short and did not respect the intelligence of those most affected to find other options. She asked for more time to do so.

Ms. Calalang asked the board where students and staff would go if Harris was closed, how boundaries would be adjusted, and if students transferring to Harris would be allowed to stay or required to enter the lottery. She asked how parents could make a decision when the board decision and lottery deadline were so close together. She asked if programs now in place at Harris would be in place at other schools and if staff in those schools would be qualified. Could staff and families develop creative options that support the core values without shifting students as proposed? Could the district support Harris as a small neighborhood school and help highlight its programs to attract more students? Could Harris develop a Spanish dual immersion school? Could the district revise the transfer processes to support all neighborhood schools and alternative programs in the same way?

Kris Moe, Meadowlark Parent Organization, said the superintendent's proposal closed two neighborhood schools and the parent organization strongly opposed it. He noted the support Meadowlark received from the neighborhood and the likelihood more students would attend. He noted the high percentage of disadvantaged students at Meadowlark and suggested closing the school would place a large burden on the students and their families, which was at odds with the process principles. It would also increase commute times for families and decrease student safety, and he questioned how moving the school to Kinney Loop would support sustainability when more students would have to drive to reach school or travel longer distances by bus, bicycle, or foot. He suggested that the loss of the school would threaten local business support of school fund-raising efforts, and the reduced community identity would lower volunteerism. He asked about the boundary restructuring plans and what other schools might be included in the new school. He asked what the back-up plan was if the proposed bond measure did not pass. He asked how the incremental transfers from Meadowlark would occur. Mr. Moe asked why the recommendations, which took two years to produce, took so little time to review. He suggested that the public's ability to offer feedback was being limited. He said there was no way to calculate savings the district claimed the recommendation would make or to find out the answer to questions such as the status of Title I funding. He asked how the public could judge the recommendation without that information.

Dannette Bloomer and **Maria Kalmbach** of the Parker Elementary School Site Council welcomed the opportunity to grow as a neighborhood school without the constraints imposed by collocation. They welcomed new students and their families to the Parker community. They asked that the board's decisions recognized the space constraints at Parker. They recalled the threat of closure to Parker that had been negated by hard work on the part of staff and families. They wanted to protect what made Parker successful but that could not occur with the current overcrowding, and suggested that replacing one school with another might not be in the best interest of all as space problems would continue to exist. They asked for the board's assistance in providing more space and resources to assure quality education for all students. They asked that the superintendent's recommendations be implemented in a way that allowed the schools and their families to plan.

Morley Hegstrom, Principal of Roosevelt Middle School, noted that 40 percent of Roosevelt students were transfers. She asked the board to phase in restricted school choice at SEHS so current students could continue to attend until graduation. She expressed concern that if Harris students went to Parker while Edison students got "phased up," the range of diversity at Roosevelt would be narrowed rather than widened. She emphasized the importance of choice to students, which she acknowledged could be diminished by lower district enrollment. She also acknowledged it was difficult to establish schools in the size of the Quality Education Model, and

suggested programmed staffing or consolidating at the middle school level to ensure schools were of a size that provided a quality education.

Judy Wenger, a Roosevelt Middle School teacher, emphasized the importance of the district's children and asked if the district was serving all its students to the best of its ability. She suggested that one way was to ensure that all children had an equal chance at the district's educational offerings. She said there were children who could not participate in after-school offerings such as drama, and she believed those classes should be made available during the day. She feared if Roosevelt or any other school became too small, such classes would be eliminated. She wanted everyone to have the opportunity of a rich education, and that required more students. She suggested that might require combining schools.

Michelle Krupka, representing the Twin Oaks Elementary School, expressed appreciation that the school was not recommended for closure. She said Twin Oaks was a true neighborhood school that exemplified the principles of the process. Its student population was consistent since its consolidation with Bailey Hill six years before. Its demographics were representative of the district and its families were very supportive of the school. She noted the richness of the school's offerings, including physical education, music, and special education. She thanked the district for supporting its neighborhood schools.

Tom Boyatt, a parent representing the Village School, suggested that people needed to figure out now to harness their love for their schools, which equated to parental involvement, and instead of competition, combine them. He suggested that perhaps an alternative program could become a neighborhood school. He believed that Harris could be Harris with the Eastside program in place there. He recommended that the district explore transfers between schools. He recommended the board take a pause and investigate the thinking that had occurred and options that had been brought forward. He asked the board to recognize families' love for their schools and the high functioning values of the alternatives and the possibilities of the charter in a more holistic way to eliminate winners and losers.

Judy Volta, Mayor of the City of Coburg, said Coburg Elementary was the heart of the Coburg community and part of the community's identity was wrapped up in retaining the school. She noted the three-year agreement reached with the district to maintain the school while experiencing low enrollment. She said that Coburg would soon begin to grow because ground would be broken on the wastewater system in the spring. She feared that if the district announced it would close the school, families would be reluctant to relocate to Coburg, causing property taxes and revenues to decline, as well as commerce and city staffing. She encouraged the board to allow the community to continue to discuss the issue with the district. She said it was important that the school remained in Coburg.

Hanna Allford, a Coburg Elementary School student, spoke of the activities and staff at her school and advocated for keeping her school open. She noted the many fund-raisers and music offerings, including recitals. She said it was a good school and asked the board to keep it open.

Kent Howe, a Roosevelt Middle School parent, supported Ms. Hegstrom's remarks regarding school choice. He said that his family, which lived downtown, chose to send its children to Edison rather than their neighborhood school because it was a better fit. He recalled that Edison had been a feeder school that tracked to Roosevelt and SEHS, but the district changed that policy. He asked that the district soften its approach by allowing all students, not just those in language immersion programs, to track from elementary to middle to high school without the threat of "being thrown to the wind" at "each school transition juncture." He suggested that at a minimum, a grandfathering approach was appropriate. He thought that it was important to

students' academic and social well-being to be able to do so without the need to re-enter the lottery.

Mr. Howe suggested the district change boundaries that were illogical or unreasonable; his family lived less than a mile away from SEHS but was in the North Eugene High School attendance area, four miles away. He recommended the district institute an appeal process with specific criteria involving geographic factors, travel distance, neighborhood boundaries, and transportation factors for families affected by illogical attendance areas. He thought that location should matter in regard to the district's boundaries.

Mr. Howe believed the superintendent's recommendations over-allocated district resources to alternative schools and to closing the achievement gap, two things that affect a relatively small percentage of students. He said those things were important, but the recommendations did not meet the needs of his family, and his family was part of the middle class the district said was important to the performance of low-income students. He asked the district to acknowledge the needs of families such as his, and to balance the district resources to better meet the needs of all students.

Nancy Johnson, a Coburg elementary school parent, advocated for keeping Coburg school open. She noted the frequent contact students had with the mayor and police and fire departments through their volunteer activities at the school. Ms. Johnson said that closing the school would be in opposition to the district's value regarding choice. She questioned how the plan's call for "super schools" would benefit her child. Ms. Johnson noted that she moved back to Coburg so her children could attend the school and spoke of her own positive experience at the school. The report spoke to declining enrollment, but her school's enrollment was increasing even without municipal sewers and would grow even more if it had a full-time kindergarten. She suggested that the district consolidate Gilham and Buena Vista and leave Meadowlark and Coburg schools alone. She questioned if it was fair for children who lived out North Coburg Road to have to travel for more than an hour to reach a school.

Ms. Johnson noted Coburg's investment in computer technology and students' involvement with various civic programs, and suggested that students would not have such experiences at a larger school. She also noted Coburg's strong support for its school and said that closing the school would devastate the community because no new families would move there. She mentioned several other process principles that she believed were at odds with the recommendation.

Benton Olum, a Coburg School parent, spoke in support of keeping Coburg Elementary School open because he believed its closure would erode the foundation of his community. He did not want to have to decide between being involved with his children's activities and serving his community as assistant volunteer fire chief if his children were required to attend school in Eugene. He spoke of the frequent contact children enjoyed with the city administrators and public service personnel, and asked the board to keep the school open.

Leah Clay Poole also spoke in support of keeping Coburg Elementary School open. She recalled her own experience at the school and the support she enjoyed from the community. She had returned to Coburg to give her children a chance to attend the school because she knew they would be protected, guided, and supported just as she was. Ms. Poole believed the school was a reflection of the larger community and was valued by the community. It gave students a sense of place and history. She asked the board to keep the school open.

Julie Olum, a Coburg parent, read a letter from former school board member Palmer O'King, who was unable to attend the meeting, in support of keeping Coburg Elementary School open. Mr. O'King asserted in his letter that a 1952 consolidation agreement between Coburg and the district precluded the school from being closed.

Cinya Knapp, a Coburg parent, spoke of her children's positive experience in attending Coburg Elementary School after an unsuccessful attempt at attending Bertha Holt. She emphasized the high degree of parental involvement and the community's support for the school. She said the school size provided for individual attention and allowed students to develop relationships with their teachers and parent volunteers. Students developed strong bonds with other students. She termed the school a family and urged the board to keep it open.

John Bosley, the Police Chief of the City of Coburg, suggested that all children should be given the opportunity to ride or walk to their neighborhood school. He did not think it realistic to expect all students could be bused to school. Many students would be required to walk or ride their bicycles the 4-1/2 miles to the school, requiring them to travel along Coburg Road, a road with vehicles traveling at high speeds, and to pass gravel quarries where trucks entered and exited.

Craig Gibbons, Finance Director of the City of Coburg, noted his distribution of a memorandum to the board explaining the community's new sewer system and its impact on the community. He assured the board the community would grow soon in a manner similar to other nearby communities and asked the board to keep the school open. He acknowledged population growth did not equate with school growth but a recent informal survey he had done indicated about 50 children could be attributed to a block of new housing being developed. He pointed out that Coburg already had a lot of kids.

Martha Moultry, Principal of the Charlemagne at Fox Hollow French Immersion School, suggested that collocated schools were, at worst, a total disaster and not desirable given the added burden they placed on the staff of both schools. In regard to diversity, she said both schools were directed to increase diversity, but the relocation of two of the highest SES schools to Harris would not necessarily yield a more diverse population but would displace an already diverse one. She expressed concern about the parents who were unaware of the program as opposed to those who were aware and choose not to attend. She thought the lack of knowledge as well as lack of transportation options precluded true choice. Ms. Moultry noted her school population and said all students were coming from neighborhood schools; if the board was concerned about diversity it would raise her school's enrollment cap and lift the restriction on advertising and recruiting. She urged the district to investigate reducing the carbon footprint of all district families and look outside the box for real solutions rather than creating new problems.

Ms. Moultry suggested that Harris Elementary would need even more space with two kindergartens and asked how many unsightly modular units were too many. She was also concerned about the human work load costs from working in modular units. Ms. Moultry suggested that Charlemagne and Eastside had different philosophies and if the district valued both programs and thought them distinctive, they should have distinct locations. She also suggested that the board consider building additional classrooms in the school's current location, make it K-8, and promote it more widely to underrepresented populations. She called for more creative thinking about the transportation issue.

Denise Packman, first grade teacher at Charlemagne at Fox Hollow French Immersion School, provided an overview of the program's design.

Dr. Martinez called for a brief recess. Following the recess, he called for more testimony.

Cora McKibben, a former Coburg elementary student, spoke in support of keeping the school open. She noted the small class sizes, which supported education, and the lack of cliques at the school. She said that students at Coburg Elementary School were close because they were nonjudgmental and stood up for each other. She spoke of the strong bonds between Coburg students. Many went on to programs such as International High School. She intended to succeed with the assistance of her background at the school, which taught her to believe in herself and in others.

Kyle Lambert, a transfer student to Roosevelt Middle School, spoke in support of keeping Coburg open. He thought having a multiple range of school sizes was best for students. He said the school was the basis of the town and he did not want to lose it. More people would move in and would need the school. He thought closing it was completely contradictory.

Paige Koba, a transfer student to Roosevelt Middle School, spoke of the benefits of school choice as practiced in the district and said if it was eliminated in Eugene students could be forced into a school that was wrong for them. She said a third of the students in one of her classes were transfer students and she did not know what the school would be like if they were gone.

Jamie Goss, a transfer student at Roosevelt Middle School, suggested that a lack of school choice could result in students failing to succeed in school. He spoke of his own experience attending Roosevelt and the many excellent classes and teachers he had, which he worried would be threatened if school choice was eliminated. He thought the change would force students to schools they did not want to attend, and he said students had rights and the ability to make their own choices.

Betsy Boyd thanked the board for the differentiated staffing model included in the plan. A weighted school funding formula was consistent with the state's funding methodology. She suggested the community think of that as a floor rather than a ceiling. The enrollment management model was not supportive of the range of student needs that existed, particularly at the elementary level. She urged the board to revisit the boundaries as they led to the transportation patterns the district was seeing now. It was not surprising parents were trying to figure out what schools were best for their children. She emphasized that enrollment management was the problem. Stable funding was necessary for that; otherwise the district was failing its children. She liked the idea of a kindergarten immersion program and recommended that the district revisit the issue of class size and think of holding some money back to ensure the stability of core programming at elementary schools.

Arlene Moe, a Meadowlark parent, thought the superintendent's recommendation ran counter to the district's values as expressed by the process. She specifically objected to moving Coburg and Meadowlark, which would destroy two neighborhood schools, while Buena Vista would be left in place. She asked why low-income students were proposed to be impacted in such a negative manner. She said that children of the two schools would be forced to take busses to a new school. Ms. Moe said the district had not demonstrated any money would be saved. She thought such a decision should be based on facts and the district's stated policies. She reiterated her concern about the impact of the decision on low-income students.

Monica Anderson, a 7th grader at Cal Young Middle School who had attended Coburg Elementary School, asked the board to keep the school open. She spoke of her experience in

attending the school, which had benefited her both academically and physically because she could ride her bicycle to reach it. If the school was closed, children would have to take a bus or be driven to school by their parents. She fondly recalled many teachers and staff at the school. She said that the school closures would have an impact on all residents, whether they had children or not.

Tamera Torrence thought more work was needed on the plan to secure community support. She identified two goals for the process, that of getting more SES parents to send their students to schools in the southwest or Title I schools, and to get more students who qualified for free and reduced lunch to attend alternative schools. She suggested that for that to happen, the district would need to offer programs and services to families and then market them effectively. She advocated for the district to hire a consultant to market its schools to parents. She thought services at alternative schools must be more enticing to working families and that the district needed to invest in transportation alternatives. She called for before and after school care for working families and possible adjustments in start times. She called for consultation with parents as to the attractiveness of offerings.

Katherine Davidson spoke in support of keeping Harris Elementary School open. The school had been able to meet her child's needs, and her family was welcomed at the school like it was part of a family. Her family was given acceptance and hope at Harris, and thanks to the unmatched special education services and the school itself, the school had been her family's salvation. Ms. Davidson said that Harris school was meeting current standards and it was a neighborhood school serving many populations, so she questioned how it was not considered a model of diversity. She also questioned why the school was not given an opportunity to bring up its enrollment numbers.

Peggy Forth, a Harris parent, asked the board not to close the school. She spoke of the benefits her children, in particular her special needs child, had experienced as a result of attending Harris and she feared the good that had been gained would be lost if Harris was closed. She emphasized the importance of the school to her children and said they deserved what they already had and would be lost in a larger school.

David Sokoloff, an Eastside and SEHS parent, expressed gratitude for the district's choice policy as it allowed the district to meet the needs of all children. Those who called for an end to school choice were ignoring the reasons for its creation. He noted the benefits his children had realized through their attendance at Eastside after less positive experiences at their neighborhood school. Among the benefits of the school was the sense of community it provided to his family. Mr. Sokoloff thought all parents should have the same choice his family did. He thanked the superintendent for proposing a new home for the school and said the work the school was doing would allow it to serve a more diverse population into the future. Eastside welcomed the families of Harris if it closed. He urged the board to support the superintendent's recommendations for Eastside.

Linda Zank, a Coburg parent, discussed the potential of Coburg students attending Madison Middle School rather than Cal Young. The superintendent suggested it was only a three-minute trip past Cal Young, but that was not the case. The added commute would be significant and would increase congestion on Coburg Road, even if most students took the bus. Transportation issues would be significant, including increased costs to parents. She asked the district to keep Coburg children at the closest middle school, which was Cal Young.

Kaye Fullerton, an Eastside parent, said she moved to Eugene for the great public schools, urged an end to negativity and said the reality was both neighborhood and alternative schools

proved to be effective learning environments. She spoke in support of keeping Eastside open, saying it was successful in fostering growth in all kinds of students. It was ideal for serving a diverse student body. She was prepared to help in any effort to increase diversity and said the school staff and parents had that as a top priority. She suggested the district could increase diversity and give students the best education possible by strengthening the best neighborhood and alternative schools, preserving school choice, and ensuring access to students of all backgrounds to the school best suited for them. Ms. Fullerton said a return to a traditional neighborhood school system would not produce the results desired by critics of school choice because otherwise, “school choice through real estate” would result. She said that diversity was not achieved through a laissez faire approach but through more proactive means, such as a lift on the marketing ban, transportation assistance, hybrid schools, and preservation of the special programs that schools had become known for.

Molly Smith, a Coburg parent, indicated her agreement with those who had spoken before her in regard to the closure of Coburg Elementary School. She opposed the closure and suggested the proposal was in opposition to the principles and goals established for the program. She further suggested the district would lose integrity when it made recommendations in direct opposition to those values. She questioned whether that was very smart.

Bridget McDonough, a Harris parent, commended Harris and Parker schools. She questioned why Harris was proposed for closure in light of the guiding principles related to equity and economic diversity espoused by the district in the Shaping 4J’s Future process. She said the superintendent proposed to displace a diverse school with two largely white alternative schools and invest money in modular units to reduce overcrowding. She questioned why Harris was proposed for closure in light of its diverse population. Ms. McDonough asked the board to allow the school to take some time to look into the potential of a merger rather than a closure. She believed any recommendation that the board seriously considered should be that with the least impact on the district’s most vulnerable children.

Lisa Rutledge, a Charlemagne parent, endorsed the remarks of Ms. Moultry and asked the board for reassurance that when the school was moved research would be done to demonstrate the move would solve the problem of diversity. All the Charlemagne parents would like more diversity, but before any move was made would like to have confirmation that location was the prime reason for the lack of diversity. Without that data, she suggested a move would be a waste of time and money. Ms. Rutledge called for elimination of the marketing ban as she thought there was public ignorance of the district’s immersion and alternative schools and their availability to all students at no cost and without an application process.

Betsy LaCroix, a Harris parent, suggested the district could save Harris Elementary School by changing its name to Harris Alternative School, as everyone would then recognize it as a diverse school and advocate for its preservation. She said Harris was an exceptional school. It had ethnic and economic diversity, and the only justification for closing it was size. She questioned why Harris was recommended for closure when other schools were not. She speculated that it was because the other schools were alternative schools. She chose Harris over other schools in the district for her family and found it as valuable an option as other schools. Losing Harris would limit choice for families in the same way losing an alternative school would. Ms. LaCroix asked the board for time to explore other options than closing the school.

Patrick Billups acknowledged the emotion involved in school closures but suggested the ramifications for high schools and middle schools should also be considered. He recommended the board consider those issues separately due to their separate implications. He said the goal

of all those present was to allow each student to reach their full potential; that included students at the highest level of academic achievement. He said that SEHS and Roosevelt provided the environments that allowed that achievement to exist. He cautioned the board against doing anything that affected the excellence that Roosevelt and SEHS had achieved. Mr. Billups believed that there would be unintended consequences from shifting students around. He pointed out that 23 percent of the students at SEHS were Talented and Gifted (TAG) students, and the district needed to attend to their needs as well, and school choice was a means to that end. He believed that downsizing SEHS through enrollment shifts would most likely affect Advanced Placement courses because of the need to “attend to the poor.”

Kaye Creider, a Roosevelt and SEHS parent, expressed support for the diverse curriculum and student body at Roosevelt and SEHS, which she believed would be lost if enrollment caps were adopted. Diversity was very important at that level. She questioned why the district would preserve choice for elementary students but not for middle school and high school students. Ms. Creider said that Roosevelt and SEHS offered challenging classes to her children, including classes in the performing arts. She maintained that the district’s plan to cap enrollment would affect the diversity of courses that were offered, and staff and curriculum cuts would occur. She thought the economic and racial diversity would also decrease as only those who could afford to purchase a house in south Eugene would be able to send their children there. She asked the board to reconsider capping enrollment and to let school choice flourish in Eugene.

Kevin Hornbuckle, a parent at Cesar Chavez, said the alternative school choice system created inequalities because families with resources naturally aggregated to give their children the best education possible. He suggested the problem became private control of public resources, which was reflected in terms such as “our school community.” He asked about the “community community” and questioned who spoke for the children whose families did not have money. He said that those families did not have the money to participate, and that did not justify educational discrimination against those children, which was the result of the school choice system.

Mr. Hornbuckle noted that he was a bus driver for the district and had worked for the poorer schools. He found it remarkable how diligent low-income families were in getting children ready for school and how much the students wanted to learn. They deserved as much opportunity as any other child. Mr. Hornbuckle did not think the superintendent’s recommendations addressed the existing inequalities and in some cases expanded them. He thought the breadth of the problem of inequality was much wider and deeper than indicated by the recommendations. He cited a recent commentary by a Sheldon High School teacher regarding International High School and the small-school system at North Eugene High School as examples of what he termed “class tracking.” The overall theme was privatization and the control of public resources for the gain of upper income families. Mr. Hornbuckle said if the means of choice did not exist, there was no choice. He cited lifting restrictions on marketing and asked if the district wanted to spend funding on marketing rather than instruction. He thought not.

John Fox, a Coburg parent, agreed with the remarks of other speakers who spoke in support of keeping Coburg Elementary School open. He concurred with the remarks of others in regard to the community involvement around the school and with the remarks of Police Chief John Bosley about the safety issues related to travel down Coburg Road. He asked about “Plan B” if the bond proposed to pay for the new school did not pass. He noted the growth that was anticipated in Coburg as a result of the new sewer system.

Alexia Hackett, a Harris parent, opposed the closure of Harris Elementary School and noted that all children at Harris were offered the opportunity for free dental care through a Lane

Community College program. She said that would not happen if the school moved. She noted the other programs that would be lost and asked what would happen to those children. She said that the school did not need to work for diversity given the existing student population, which included children who spoke other languages and children who had disabilities. She said that the board had been invited to visit the school but none of the members had taken advantage of that offer. She asked what public the board was serving by not coming to the schools to see what was really happening.

Meg Hamilton, a Harris parent, said if the school closed she would need to consider where to send her child within a very short time. Her child's choices were limited to options that she did not think were workable in the short- or long-term. She wanted her child to stay at Harris. She said there was interest among parents and teachers at Harris and Eastside in a hybrid school akin to Evergreen and Edgewood. The school communities would like an opportunity to forge a new relationship and she asked the board time to explore the option.

Genevieve Mason, a parent at Charlemagne, hoped none of the schools mentioned in testimony would be closed. She was in support of retaining the school at its current site, questioning if there was time within an 18-month period to do good planning. She thought the process was moving too fast. She also questioned the cost of closing the school. She said the school site was wonderful and unique in its wooded setting and she thought nature was a big part of life. She did not think the school district should sell public property.

Kristi Larson, a Harris parent, spoke again in support of keeping Harris open. She asked how she could make a school choice for her kindergarten-aged child with the uncertainty surrounding Harris. She would have to find a program for her children if the school closed. She called Edison and Parker about class sizes and they indicated that they would not know that until the outcome of the Shaping 4J's Future process. She asked the board to answer some of the questions the public had so she could make an educated decision. She asked the board for more time to make that decision.

Joseph Newton said school choice distinguished the Eugene school district above all other things. He said the public testimony clearly demonstrated a desire for school choice. He asked the board to listen to the people of Coburg and to keep Coburg school open.

Jennifer Barwood, an Eastside parent, said equity did not mean everyone getting the same thing, but what they needed. She thought that was being achieved at Eastside. She spoke of her son, who was a Talented and Gifted student but she considered him a special needs student because TAG students came with their own challenges. He thrived at Eastside, as did other students with special needs. Teachers recognized their unique individuality and needs and attempted to challenge them. She asked the board to improve the neighborhood schools or to attempt to demonstrate how great they are to the public. She would prefer not to drive so far but Eastside served her child's needs. She also supported busing as a transportation option. Ms. Barwood said that Eastside served a diverse student body and had room for more.

Joe Butler acknowledged the board's attempt to do the right thing. However, he was concerned that the board had radicalized the process by allowing the subjects of racial and economic status to polarize the community and dominate the conversation. He thought Nancy Willard was a vocal minority whose divisive language was hurting the community. He said allowing race, disability, or the economic status of students to color decisions about funding a school was immoral and potentially illegal. He understood the need for overall balance, but insisting that a school take measures to adjust its ratio of minorities or participants in the free

and reduced lunch program forced those schools to consider options that would improperly address their population's race or economic status.

Mr. Butler called for a district-wide policy to address the inequities that existed, and said an individual school should not be asked to take corrective action when the nation was uncertain how to act, or to answer for social inequities that were not the school's to address. Without clear guidance and policy, any action to see balance in those inequities at the school level was folly. He suggested the board was faced with a numbers problem; it had dwindling school enrollment and dwindling resources. He thought the proposed plan addressed the needs of the many in an inequitable manner by balancing choice and attempting to optimize the regional provision of services. He urged the board to accept the plan and not be swayed by powerful sound bites by the radical voices that would foment classicism in the community.

Mary Christensen, a teacher at Harris, was accompanied by **Susan Goosenah**, a teacher at Eastside. She reported on a recent meeting between teachers at Harris and Eastside and suggested that consolidation be considered. Both schools have areas of strength and need. They would like to explore collaboration with excellence, choice, and equity while furthering the spirit of the schools. They needed time to explore those ideas in an inclusive manner. She asked the board if it would consider new ideas, and if so, could the schools have more time.

Becky Smith, a Charlemagne parent, said she would have sent her child to Adams, her neighborhood school, had it offered a language program. Instead, she sent him to Charlemagne, which was somewhat closer to her home. She urged the board to take its time in making a decision about Charlemagne, taking into account the program's unique needs. Wherever the program ended up, she supported finding ways to make the school more accessible and diverse. She asked the board to reconsider the district policy prohibiting alternative schools from marketing themselves to the public. She said the district should be proud of its diversity of school choice and market them. She also advocated for funding for transportation and recommended a task force be formed to discuss options

Terrence McKenzie, a former Coburg student, said Coburg Elementary School was the best school he had attended. He spoke of the close bonds between students who attended the school. The school had a positive impact on his life. He had attention problems and believed he learned better because of the small class sizes at Coburg, which allowed the teachers to give him individual attention. He invited everyone to the Heritage Day event at Coburg school on February 22.

Tim Gleason, a Charlemagne parent, was encouraged that the report reaffirmed the values of equity, choice, and excellence. He said all should pay attention to the parts of the report that spoke to the stratification of the district. He highlighted the comments made in the report about the integrity of language immersion. Mr. Gleason raised the questions of timing and funding, saying it appeared part of the problem was that the district was trying to solve serious, systematic problems with inadequate funding. He suggested some of the concerns about timing might be addressed if the district considered a capital bond measure. He encouraged the board to also consider whether decisions and implementation were more dependent on funding, which could alleviate some of the concerns expressed in testimony

John Kim, a Charlemagne parent, agreed with those who spoke before him, particularly Ms. Moultry. He called for flexibility in the plan and hoped it looked to the future. He did not want to adopt a plan that had to be undone later. Speaking to the issue of collocation, Mr. Kim agreed with the concern expressed about space constraints and the potential that the district could be moving the problem from one area to another. He asked if the district was asking the right

questions about collocation and if it was working or creating an unnecessary tension. Mr. Kim emphasized the importance of creating stability for students. He said the district should strive for excellence and he did not want to see it achieve mediocrity instead as that did not benefit anyone.

Nancy Willard spoke to the testimony of those who asked why the recommendations did not meet the principles; she said that was answered by Ms. Gerot at the last meeting, who indicated a controlling principle was alternative schools with private-like features and open enrollment to retain parents who might otherwise enroll their children in charter schools. She said that principle also corrupted the work of the Options and Access Committee, which did not evaluate the data or examine other school choice models. She maintained that no other district with a similar school choice approach had achieved equity and integration. Ms. Willard referred those present to a Century Foundation report entitled “Divided We Fail,” which she maintained described the district. She also maintained that there were other ways to offer excellence, equity, and choice, but the district does not know about them because of the principle she previously mentioned. Ms. Willard maintained that Superintendent Russell wanted to remove collocation because alternative schools harmed neighborhood school communities, resulting in the recommendations before the board. She maintained that the alternative schools were “highly segregated” and the district had known that for some time. If the schools wanted to become integrated, they should have started working toward that end a decade earlier. She said the district would not achieve equity, excellence and choice for all students as long as the current model of school choice was maintained.

Christi Mitsu, a Fox Hollow parent, said parents were passionate about their programs and schools. She hoped the board considered the voices it was hearing and weighed them against voices who had repeatedly voiced their displeasure with the system in a passionate manner. In regard to moving Charlemagne, she said it was awesome to hear Harris parents express their willingness to work with Eastside to ease crowding at Parker. Moving Charlemagne would not change it from an almost completely commuter school to a walking, bicycle friendly school. The Harris site lacked two key features that made the decision to open to Eastside, with its commuter students, and Charlemagne, with almost all commuter students; a parking lot and a driveway. She questioned how that would be addressed when 500 cars descended upon the neighborhood twice daily.

Swacknel Mahojon, a Fox Hollow parent, said many said that alternative schools were the preserve of the rich and the white but he was proof that was not the case. He said that while the report said there were no easy or single answers, there appeared to be no single answer, although the district seemed to have picked one, to close or move schools. He noted the goals of the process and suggested the move of Fox Hollow only addressed one, which was providing equal opportunity. The move would not satisfy the other two goals. He suggested the board consider the reasons residents avoided certain neighborhood schools and work to improve them; he did not think the goal of equal opportunity was intended to bring everyone down equally, but everyone up equally. Speaking to the goal of equal opportunity, he suggested it be reworded to ‘equal access to appropriate opportunities.’ Speaking to diminishing resources, he said that Fox Hollow had done a great job of fund-raising to let the school keep up with its programs; it was not getting a handout.

Stephanie Hand, a Charlemagne parent, expressed appreciation for people’s desire for diversity but said that regardless of where a school was located, some students would not choose to attend. She thought that was a benefit of choice. She reminded those present that diversity was more than skin color and the residents of Eugene came from many different countries and backgrounds. She said Fox Hollow was a beautiful school campus and if it was

sold the district would not be able to get it back. There was land for expansion if other schools were combined or the school changed to be K-8. She asked the board not to rush the decisions and allow community members with other solutions to explore them. She thought that Lane Transit District could be part of the solution, and suggested the potential of a central bus station where parents could drop their children off for transfer to schools not in their immediate neighborhoods.

Dr. Martinez closed the public hearing. He thanked those who had testified for their commitment to the community's schools and assured them the board would take their comments into consideration as it reviewed the recommendations.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS

Superintendent George Russell indicated he took copious notes and would be prepared to respond to some of the suggestions that had been made in testimony. He believed the testimony the board heard could lead to some changes to the recommendations that could mitigate some of the concerns that had been raised.

Board Member Jim Torrey asked the pros and cons of delaying implementation of the recommendations for one year, and indicated he would appreciate that information in writing. Superintendent Russell said that would mean Eastside would not move next year because of the open enrollment process. It was likely Harris would not be closed next year, and he recalled that he had initially indicated he would not propose to close that school until 2009-2010 anyway. Mr. Torrey was prepared to hold off on the decision. He said the board asked for public comment, it received public comment, and he did not think that it was prepared to move forward even if it meant that Eastside remained open.

Board Member Eric Forrest asked how many spaces at Roosevelt and South would be taken up by transfer students who came through Charlemagne. Superintendent Russell indicated that Deputy Superintendent Tom Henry had developed those scenarios and they would be available the following week. Mr. Forrest thought Ms. Boyd raised a good point in regard to the boundary question. He said the district needed to work on that issue. Superintendent Russell recalled that he had indicated he would offer recommendations about that issue.

Mr. Forrest asked for more information about the driveway and parking at Harris.

Board Member Alicia Hays acknowledged the level of community concern about the recommendations before the board and observed that the board faced some difficult decisions. She said she would do her best to do the right thing. She asked Superintendent Russell to evaluate whether the dispersal of students from Harris, a Title I school, would allow those other schools to seek the same opportunities Harris had due to its demographics, or would those be "watered down." Mr. Henry indicated it depended on where the boundary was drawn. Staff was meeting the following day to discuss some of the options related to the boundary. He doubted that both Parker and Edison would become Title I schools but would provide additional information at a future meeting.

Board Member Craig Smith noted that Meadowlark was also a Title I school. He recalled that when the district last discussed closing Coburg, the City of Coburg had agreed to contribute some funding, and asked if that was still the case. Mr. Henry said that funding had not continued.

Mr. Smith questioned if the Charlemagne parents and Principal Moultry were “on the same page” in regard to the future of the school as the site council representatives had appeared to indicate a move would be acceptable. Superintendent Russell heard the message that a move would be acceptable, but collocation would not be.

Mr. Smith said the board heard considerable testimony about marketing constraints and he would like to know more about the district’s policies in that regard.

Mr. Smith said he was intrigued by the discussions between Harris and Eastside and wanted more information about that.

Board Member Yvette Webber-Davis said the board also heard testimony from both parents and school staff about the importance of certainty for families who wished to remain in a certain cohort. She was concerned that the board was sending messages to the schools and not following through in some way as expeditiously as possible. She thought morale suffered as a result and wanted to avoid that to the degree possible. She wanted the board to be able to share its conclusions with the public soon.

Board Vice Chair Beth Gerot concurred with Ms. Hays about the level of community concern in regard to the recommendations. She indicated a desire to know more about what the superintendent was thinking in regard to boundaries in the Sheldon area and how students in that area would be accommodated over the next few years.

Ms. Gerot spoke to the issue of transportation, acknowledging that Coburg and Meadowlark were both schools that students reached by foot and bicycle, and she wanted to have more information about the implications of the recommendations in regard to that. Superintendent Russell said that issue was largely dependent on future growth and development, some of which was unknown, but staff would examine maps of the area and he would share some of his thoughts on what might make sense.

Ms. Gerot noted that many of the elementary schools in that region were over their enrollment targets, as was Sheldon High School, and she thought the board needed to consider how the district would operate within that enrollment framework.

Ms. Gerot asked what impact a shift of students from Harris to Parker would have on the free and reduced lunch student population at Roosevelt.

Mr. Smith referred to the letter from Mr. O’King and the promise he discussed, and he recalled that the board had reviewed the record and found no agreement to the effect that the school would not be closed.

Dr. Martinez agreed with Ms. Hays about the difficulty of the task that lay before the board. However, he also found it inspiring to hear the dedication of parents and the general community to the district.

Dr. Martinez wanted more information about the potential of a merger between Eastside and Harris and what the result of that might look like.

Dr. Martinez agreed with Ms. Gerot about the importance of understanding the dynamics of the Sheldon region. In regard to the new school, he said the district could not locate Buena Vista, an alternative school, in a new building because of the message it sent to the public. However, he thought the idea of protecting the Meadowlark school community or the Coburg school

community was an important countervailing consideration. He asked staff to give that some more thought.

Dr. Martinez agreed with Ms. Hays about the difficulty of the decisions before the board and with Dr. Webber-Davis about the importance of making a decision soon.

ADJOURN

Dr. Martinez adjourned the meeting at 10:46 p.m.

George Russell
District Clerk

Charles Martinez, Jr.
Board Chair

(Recorded by Kimberly Young)