The Board of Directors of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a joint work session with the Budget Committee followed by a regular board meeting at 6 p.m. on December 15, 2010, at the Education Center, 200 North Monroe Street, Eugene, Oregon. Notice of the meeting was mailed to the media and posted in the Education Center on December 10, 2010, and published in The Register-Guard on December 13, 2010.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS:
Craig Smith, Chair
Alicia Hays, Vice Chair
Jennifer Geller
Beth Gerot
Jim Torrey (participating by telephone)
Mary Walston

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:
Anne Marie Levis

BUDGET COMMITTEE CITIZEN MEMBERS:
Pete Gribskov
Carla Gary
Debra Smith
Shirley Clark
Tim Gleason
Betsy Boyd
Wendy Laing

STAFF:
George Russell, Superintendent of Schools
Barbara Bellamy, Chief of Staff and Communications Director
Carl Hermanns, Assistant Superintendent/Chief Operating Officer
Susan Fahey, Chief Financial Officer
Jon Lauch, Director of Facilities Management
Les Moore, Director of Computing and Information Services
Sara Cramer, Director of Elementary Education
Kerry Delf, Communications Coordinator
Caroline Passerotti, Financial Analysis and Budget Manager
Celia Feres-Johnson, Director of Human Resources
Laurie Moses, Director of Secondary Education
Claire Wiles, Teacher, School of IDEAS, North Eugene High School

STUDENT ADVISORY PANEL MEMBERS:
Sun Sun Gan & Lydia Tam, Churchill High School
Carolyn Conklin, North Eugene High School
OVERVIEW OF REVISED RECOMMENDATIONS

Board Chair Craig Smith called the joint work session of the School District 4J Board of Directors and Budget Committee to order. He stated that the purpose of the work session was to come up with recommendations for Superintendent Russell and district staff, with the final budget recommendation up for approval on January 22.

Superintendent Russell said he wanted to talk about what had happened since he had made his preliminary recommendations. He explained that one important thing to consider was that the revised recommendations were based on a significant difference in assumptions from what had driven the original recommendations. He related that the Governor and Governor-elect had both indicated that they intended to maintain K through 12th grade education at the status quo, but the original assumption was that the funding would be cut by 5 percent. Since then, the board had spoken to the local legislative delegation and they indicated that they believed the status quo would be maintained. He said Monday the Governor had advised local school districts that they should be building budgets based on a state budget of $5.4 billion and not $5.7 billion. He explained that this meant a $26 million cut in School District 4J's budget instead of the $22 million cut that the revised recommendation had been built upon. He added that the board had a goal of having a sustainable budget by 2012-13; the revised budget was based on moving the timeline for this goal out to 2014-15.

Superintendent Russell commented that it had been unfortunate that there had been so much attention paid to reconfiguration and school closure that it seemed that people had not initially grasped the severity of changing the staffing ratio. Since then it had become apparent to him that this would have a devastating initial impact and the district should work to find a way to have the impact be less severe. He had provided the board and committee with a spreadsheet that showed what the impacts on schools would have been. He underscored that the staffing ratio change was still significant.

Continuing, Superintendent Russell still thought the district needed to close some schools. While he recognized that no one wanted to close schools and that school closures had significant impacts on families and kids, he did not think the board could avoid school closure for the next year.

Superintendent Russell had been encouraged by the city meeting held on the previous evening. It seemed to him that in the longer term there may be some additional revenue source to offset potential cuts in the future.

Superintendent Russell briefly reviewed his revised recommendations. He noted that he had heard from some people that the teachers union was out of touch with teaching staff. He strongly disagreed with this as he had heard a mostly unified message from them. He added that he had heard about closing schools from some teachers, but he had not heard any
teachers oppose closing any schools. He related that teaching staff had indicated that they were glad that reconfiguration was off the table. He underscored the high level of teacher interest in what they were doing and many had real concerns about the recommendations.

**STAFF RESPONSES TO BOARD & BUDGET COMMITTEE QUESTIONS**

Barb Bellamy, Chief of Staff and Communications Director, highlighted the responses to the questions the board had asked at the previous meeting. She had provided answers to two of three questions via email earlier in the afternoon that she had not been able to get to in time to include in the attachment. She noted that she had transposed two numbers in her answer regarding the number of students in the North Eugene High School region -- it should have read that just over 1,000 were enrolled and 1,342 resided in the area.

Ms. Bellamy said, regarding the school closure criteria, that the leading reason for school closure was declining enrollment. She stated that the district currently had about 16,000 students but once had about 22,000 students, with no change in that trend in the foreseeable future. She attributed this to a change in the demographic of the community and underscored that it could not be attributed to charter schools, private schools, or home schooling.

Ms. Bellamy noted that many wondered what key factor would lead to the recommendation to close their neighborhood school. She stated that it was never one factor, but rather was a number of factors to take into consideration.

Susan Fahey, Chief Financial Officer, reviewed the status of reserve accounts with power point slides.

Regarding the fleet fund, Mr. Smith pointed out that most of it had a designated purpose. Ms. Fahey added that it was currently nearly all assigned.

Ms. Laing asked if the strategy, regarding the District Retirement Fund which had $4.6 million in it, was to use the entire Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) reserve, $2.5 million, in 2011-12. Ms. Fahey clarified that the district would use half, i.e. $1.25 million, in 2011-12 and half in 2012-13.

Ms. Boyd asked what circumstances had brought the district to the Insurance Reserve Fund, which had $8.3 million in it, to borrow or otherwise tap the reserves. She noted that at one of the Thought Leaders sessions, someone had suggested that this reserve could be a place where the district could have a conversation with employees about what level of risk they were willing to tolerate. She assumed it was there to protect the district against something catastrophic happening to someone that was insured by the district. Ms. Fahey responded that the way the funds accumulated was that for every employee, the district through negotiations came up with a monthly insurance contribution whether they accepted or waived insurance. She stated that this went into the insurance reserve fund. She said the other revenue sources that went into it were the personal employee out-of-pocket contributions to help pay the insurance bills. She explained that it accumulated when employee and district contributions came to more than the insurance bills for that group. She said these funds had not been used for anything other than expenditures that supported the employee groups.

Paul Duchin, former president of the Eugene Employees Association (EEA), clarified that there had been transfers from the reserves to the district lump sums that were different from what she described. He believed they had amounted to nearly $750,000.
Ms. Fahey recalled that the reserve was used to buy days, such as an in-service day.

Mr. Duchin said it had also been used to defer some of the cost of the insurance.

Ms. Boyd understood that there had been strategies in the past to spend money from the insurance reserves to buy back days and pay for salary unrelated to health insurance. She wondered if a strategy of using any of these reserves to buy back days had been broached. Ms. Fahey replied that these sorts of discussions would happen through negotiations and they had yet to occur.

Ms. Boyd wished to underscore that doing so was not unprecedented.

**DISCUSSION**

Mr. Gleason considered the reduction in the projected deficit to be good news, but he wondered how the present proposal based on a more optimistic projection would position the district, looking ahead to potential cuts in the latter half of the biennium. Superintendent Russell referred to page 6 of the attachment with *Responses to Board and Budget Committee Questions* which answered this question in part. He said the question was what would the district have to fall back on and one answer was reserves. He stated that the other answer would be to cut positions if the district found itself in a financial bind.

Ms. Boyd thanked Superintendent Russell for providing the recommendation regarding the high school ratio. She had been very concerned about it. She noted that she had served on the Budget Committee since 2003 and had seen the ratio for high school changed in order to maintain the ratio for the younger grades. She believed they were at a tipping point for this ratio. She observed that the comments seemed to indicate that with the cuts the district would only be just managing the high school requirements. Laurie Moses, Director of Secondary Education, said they hoped this would not be the case. She related that when they attempted to respond to the question of what the minimum would be, they understood that an increase in the ratio to six would actually translate to an increase of eight students per staff member. She thought it was clear they would be obligated to begin with what was essential to graduate from high school. She said they would like to think they would be graduating kids prepared to enter the whole U. S. system. She declared that they would have to take a look at the courses they were offering.

Ms. Boyd thought it was a shocking statement about the community's values, that they would propose a budget that would offer, at best, only a diploma for high school students and that it would not meet their need to enter a college. She did not have confidence that they really understood the staffing ratio and how it would affect students. She did not feel they could move forward without that understanding. She wanted to know how 4J compared with other districts. She was worried and wanted to see more work on it.

Superintendent Russell related that he had a great conversation with University of Oregon President Lariviere and other university administration, along with representatives of Bethel and Springfield School Districts, about what was happening with all of the districts across the state and the implications of the increased requirements in the face of rising deficits. He said they had discussed the impacts to enrollment to the University of Oregon and other state schools.

Ms. Boyd was curious to see the statistics by high school; she wanted to see the differences in what the high schools were able to provide in terms of variety of electives and the opportunity to
meet students' needs. She underscored that the different schools had different access to private fundraising and this was one reason they saw the "hydrology around choice."

Mr. Torrey asked if it would be possible to consult the University's Department of Education for suggestions in how the district might deal with the concerns Ms. Boyd had raised. He felt her point was well-taken. He also wondered if there was any opportunity for the district to do something more with the College Now program provided through Lane Community College (LCC).

Mr. Gleason had been shocked by the answer to question no. 15, regarding how many high school students had a full schedule and how many would be able to have a full day under the new ratio. He surmised that at present the district did not have the capacity for all students to take the level of work required to gain admission to an OUS institution. Ms. Moses responded that she would not go that far but she would agree that there were not enough Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees in the high schools for all students to have full schedules. She underscored that they were providing, at a minimum level, the courses students would need to get into the OUS system but they were without much variety and sometimes students had to take them in very large classes.

Ms. Boyd understood that the district, under the current system, did not have enough variety in classes for every student to take a full load and this probably meant that some students who might be tempted to stay in school if they could take a welding class or another elective could drift away from school.

Ms. Moses thought that was one conclusion that could be reached. She averred that certainly variety would be one thing they would like to offer more of and they would have liked to be able more technical education options. She noted that the latter had been cut years earlier when enrollment began to diminish.

Mr. Gleason related that he had spoken with a student who was in an Advanced Placement (AP) class who had indicated to him that she was in a class with 60 students in it. He asked if that was the norm. Ms. Moses affirmed that some of the AP classes were very large.

Superintendent Russell had asked some teachers at South Eugene High School about the size of AP classes and they had responded that the largest had not quite 50 students in it. Carl Hermanns, Assistant Superintendent/Chief Operating Officer, added that this was on their "radar" and on their minds every day. He underscored that Ms. Moses had convened the Graduation Task Force for some time now to look at just those issues.

Ms. Geller observed that they were looking at the minimum requirements and this was not an ideal situation. She said they needed to look at what the private universities required as well as what the public universities required.

Ms. Hays commented that when 50 kids were put into a classroom, those that were going to try to get to Harvard or Yale would have the support to do that but there would be kids that would not be able to get into LCC that would be overlooked. She said her son was currently a junior and she saw first-hand how large class sizes were. She found it frustrating that people would come before the board and tell them that the district needed to live within its means when this was exactly what they were doing. She understood that a family facing financial struggles would move to a smaller house and cut expenses and this was what the district was doing, but they needed to ask themselves what the cost of this was. She stressed that the situation was
not just happening this year, it had been coming for ten years. She agreed that people should be frustrated and angry and they should look for a solution, but if they wanted to talk to her about PERS they should keep in mind that it was a state issue that the district could do nothing about. She asked people to start putting their energy where they needed to. She declared that they needed to start saying their kids were worth it and they needed to start doing something about it; it was hard to continue to negatively affect the lives of young people as voters and taxpayers.

Ms. Gary said she would like to know by high school who would have the greatest likelihood of a full schedule. It was frightening to her that the district was not preparing young people to be competitive in college and that they would not provide the opportunity for those who historically had been unprepared for college. She underscored that this would affect them as a community. She believed that they were setting up yet another iteration of a disparity that continued to grow. She related that she had been approached by people who agreed that the district needed to close schools, so long as it was not their school. She felt the community was becoming more demographically diverse than it had ever been. She said there was a great correlation in how they served those who were least likely to make it. She wanted to know which schools would be impacted disproportionately. She felt that this was where they needed to ask themselves whether they were going to stand for community or just for their own children.

Mr. Smith said if they decided that changing the staffing ratio at the high school level was inappropriate they needed to find the money from elsewhere. He asked them to consider where the adjustment should come from.

Ms. Smith related that her kids had gone to Santa Clara Elementary School and she had experienced what it was to have a neighborhood school close. She had looked at the proposal and felt that there "was plenty of pain to go around." She asked if the staffing ratio at the high school level was an attempt to equitably distribute that pain among the kids in order to try to keep as much of the teaching and learning needs intact as possible. Mr. Hermanns replied that they were trying, with the revised recommendations, to cut the staffing ratio from 4-5-6 to 2-3-3 and this "was huge." He said when they knew what they were working with, they had methods of looking at how the students were doing and they would be able to refine it. He related that the largest conversation that staff engaged in was how they could, using what they had, structure schools so that kids who were doing well kept doing well and how they could help kids that were struggling with continued differentiated resources.

Superintendent Russell did not consider the situation to be about spreading the pain equally. He said it was about what made sense and what would provide the most equitable services.

Mr. Torrey agreed. He believed the district would be forced to find more creative and effective ways to educate the kids because of the changing circumstances. He said one subsection of the position paper the elementary teachers and principals had put together had been called safety and support. He related that the section talked about teaching and learning coordinators, the people who looked directly at the kids who were at the highest risk of not being able to compete. He hoped they would not lose track of the continuing need to provide this service. He felt the pain of the people whose schools had been identified for possible closure. He kept asking himself whether it was the physical building they were concerned about losing or was it the teachers and the other students they did not want to lose. He was not certain they could meet both needs if they continued with the existing building and lost staff as a result of funding cuts.
Ms. Geller commented that no one liked the recommendations, but they were on target for what they had to do. For her the largest concern was the staffing ratio and if they found themselves in a better position, it would be the first area to restore funding to. She indicated that she was willing to look at a slightly longer term sustainable budget goal and some use of reserves, though she advised caution in regard to the latter.

Ms. Geller had found the additional information regarding school closures to be helpful. She related that one thing that had come up was a recommendation for a more centralized location for Fox Hollow Elementary School. She said she had also heard from members of the public that Crest Drive Elementary had a larger capacity than had been presented to the board.

Jon Lauch, Director of Facilities Management, stated that the information regarding the capacity that had come from the "press community" had been based on 30 kids per classroom but in their analysis the district staff had been using 27 kids per classroom. He said in that there was an acknowledgement that 25 was out of date, but he thought 30 was a little high. He added that the other thing that impacted a school's capacity were special education programs. He explained that special education students required two settings as they needed to have access to general education as well as special education services.

Mr. Gribskov said the real problem had to do with the funding source; state funding was going down because of declining enrollment. He observed that the obvious solution was to consolidate schools. He felt that the easiest option to take would be to make some boundary changes so that each school had a similar enrollment.

Ms. Bellamy related that generally when the district had looked at school closures, it seemed the easiest way to adjust boundaries was to approach it by closing schools. She said without school closures, boundary changes would only make more small schools without school closures.

Mr. Gribskov clarified that this was what he meant; he was suggesting they make boundary changes in line with the school closures.

Ms. Boyd averred that the board had to show leadership in reconfiguring how the community thought about education. She believed that program redesign needed to be part of the conversation. She was interested in a weighted funding formula; she thought that if they were allocating money to the schools the way the state allocated money to school districts, they could look at what school communities needed and they could account for differences such as the number of students in a district with a lower socio-economic status.

Ms. Boyd thought they needed to revisit the staffing ratio and that the district needed to use its resources. She felt the district could change the staffing ratio by 2 at the high school level, so that they would be cutting 38.5 FTE in teaching staff rather than 57.6 with a change in ratio by 3 and rather than 76 with a change in ratio by 4. In response to a question from Mr. Smith, she clarified that she would like to see more information regarding the thinking behind the staffing ratio changes that were proposed.

Superintendent Russell underscored that reconfiguration and school closures had nothing to do with changing the assumption. He said there was a direct causal connection between the funding assumptions and the staffing ratio and it would be affected by the change in the shortfall, either up or down. He said the individual principals could provide information as to what the proposed staffing ratio changes looked like for them in the high schools.
Ms. Boyd underscored that her core value was that students should be able to go to high schools and get the education that would allow them to pursue higher education, should they decide to do so.

Mr. Gleason remarked that the problem he was having in making any informed analysis on the staffing ratios was that they were all bad. It seemed to him that though the board had adopted the core values of excellence, equity, and choice and had tried to honor all three, it was difficult to understand how those three values had been balanced in the revised recommendations. He understood that every school principal would be able to say that the cuts were devastating in one way or another and that the education students were going to get would be less than it might have been with more funding. He asked if the district was serving those three values or was it making decisions that would disadvantage the most disadvantaged of the students.

Mr. Hermanns agreed. He underscored that the district was keeping equity and excellence at the forefront, but they were not certain how choice would "play out." He said if they did not reconfigure schools it would constrain options. He stated that the challenge lay in how they would ensure there were supports for children who needed them in order to make certain there was equity. He added that the big question was how and to what extent the district could use instructional redesign, 21st century skills, collaboration, and applied learning in an interdisciplinary way to mitigate staffing reductions.

Superintendent Russell commented that there was a perception among the community that the district had been balanced to favor choice and that the district had not met the equity and excellence pieces of the "triangle."

Mr. Gleason asked what the analysis of this showed. Mr. Hermanns replied that some people thought the alternative schools, and the language immersion schools in particular, were resourced at a better level. He stressed that this was not so. He understood that some people questioned why the district did not just close the alternative schools, but this was a conversation the board needed to undertake. He said they needed to ask what they wanted language learning to look like in Eugene. He observed that the language immersion schools were the one school venue that offered a completely different pedagogical experience. He acknowledged that concerns had also been raised about why children should have to lottery into language schools and why languages were not available to all of the district's students given that we now lived in a global society.

Sara Cramer, Director of Elementary Education, clarified that there was a small amount of FTE used for differentiated staffing for schools. She explained that there was a little under 6 FTE that the district used for socio-economic status and this was divided based on the level of Free and Reduced Lunch program participants in a school. She said the Teaching and Learning Coordinator position had been distributed out to schools based on the number of students who were being worked with on interventions.

Ms. Smith observed that the focus had shifted; they were now talking more about the student/teacher ratio when before it had largely been on school closure and reconfiguration. She trusted that the district staff, who knew more than she did, was bringing forward the best possible recommendation under the circumstances. The cuts appeared to be distributed as evenly as possible and she supported the budget more or less as staff had presented it thus far.
Ms. Walston said that the worst of the current situation was the pain they were going through but the best of the situation was that it presented an opportunity for needed transformation. She had faith in the staff and administration and she had faith in the resilience of the students. She thought the sooner the board and budget committee defined the direction they planned to take, the better it would be for everyone as they worked their way through this difficult situation. She shared some concern about closing neighborhood schools and she agreed that they needed to take a step back and consider choice more thoroughly. She supported the idea of extending the deadline for a sustainable budget for one more year. She was also concerned about the present risk to reserve funds.

Ms. Gerot expressed concern about the budget assumption. She said the governor elect had spoken about the $5.4 billion budget for K through 12th grade education and this gave her pause in terms of where they should start from. She appreciated the position paper submitted by the elementary principals. She felt it was a statement on the need to close some of the smaller schools. She said a number of schools had closed during the time she had been on the board. She believed it had been a good move for students, by and large. She said the board's responsibility was to provide staff with the resources and support to be able to have the time to spend to undertake the planning that needed to happen for the changes ahead. She noted that the conversation about how to undertake the transformation was scheduled to happen in April and she would recommend that it be moved up to February.

Additionally, Ms. Gerot stressed the importance of being clear about their vision of the future. In hearing from high school principals, she thought they needed to look at the education there and working back from there. She thought they might need to look at changing the staffing ratio and potentially looking at how they provided the instruction in a transformational way. She also emphasized the importance of using the equity lens in anything they talked about and any school configuration should be based on instructional needs over the space available in the buildings. She thought they should look at centralization of some of the programs. She added that while immersion schools were funded at the same level, their fundraising capabilities were generally greater.

Ms. Clark agreed with what had been said. She considered the revised recommendations to be an improvement. Regarding the staffing ratio, she preferred to favor the younger students over the older students. She hoped that with the planning for high schools there would be a balance struck between smaller classes for some things and very large classes for others. While she had been surprised to see the small percentage of students in high schools that had full schedules, she thought the district was one of many in that situation. She stressed the importance of reviewing the curriculum offerings to ensure they were going well beyond the requirements for a high school diploma and at what the minimal requirements were of public education in the state.

Ms. Laing asked what level of confidence the superintendent had that the EEA would accept the level of cuts that were included in the current revised budget recommendation. She added that she wondered if, at some point, the district would cease to be able to attract "the best and the brightest" to be teachers there. Superintendent Russell responded that his confidence level was high that the EEA would engage in conversations with the district, but his confidence that the district and EEA would get everything they wanted was moderate to low.

Ms. Hays thanked the Budget Committee for joining the board. She supported having more joint meetings.
Mr. Smith noted that when Governor Kitzhaber was previously in office, he had a lot of budget proposals that were ultimately funded at levels that were higher than what he had proposed.

Mr. Torrey agreed that it might change in the legislature. He hoped that in discussions with the Mayor on new resource opportunities there would be consideration of how it could impact a capital bonding measure. He underscored that some of the changes they were proposing would require money to assist the district in adjustments. He also reiterated that while he was a proponent of keeping four high schools, he was not certain the district would be able to do so.

Additionally, Mr. Torrey suggested doing some outreach with the Bethel School District about how they could deal differently with where students were in Eugene.

The work session adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING

CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND FLAG SALUTE

Board Chair Craig Smith called the regular meeting of the School District 4J Board of Directors to order. He led everyone present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA REVIEW

There were no changes to the agenda.

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Superintendent George Russell related that he had received a letter and card with a check for $10 from a 6th grader who was concerned about the school budget. He also read a letter that had accompanied a check for a $1000 donation to the schools’ operating funds for 2012 from a couple of patrons. The letter was from Richard and Jean White and they indicated that even though their children were long grown they believed education was one of the best investments they could make in their community and in the future. He thanked them for their donation and support.

COMMENTS BY STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Carolyn Conklin, North Eugene High School, reported that the canned food drive had gone well. She said many seniors, as well as other organizations in the school, were holding fundraisers to help out the local and global community. She commented that all donations were welcome from anyone who wished to help.

Sun Sun Gan, Churchill High School, stated that the canned food drive for Food for Lane County had begun on December 13. She said it was a competition between grades and thus far the sophomores were winning by 88 cans. Lydia Tam reported that the elections for leadership positions happened earlier in the day and a lot of freshmen had run for positions, which was good. She also related that a new club had been started, called Steps of Love, and the focus was on doing random acts of kindness. Ms. Gan added that there had been a lockdown that day due to a police incident. She stressed that the incident was not associated with the school in any way.
ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Receive a Report from the North Eugene High School Team

Representative staff members and students from North Eugene High School provided a report on their response to the school's Progress Review prepared by Education Northwest and presented to the board in October. They provided an outline what they considered to be the next steps in the development of the small school model at the North Eugene campus.

Ms. Moses recalled that the board had received a report in October from the Oregon Small Schools Initiative (OSSI). She said they had a group of staff and students present that would share some of their responses to the report.

Claire Wiles stated that she taught at the School of IDEAS at North Eugene High School. She had been pleased by the report which called out the many positive changes that had occurred as a result of participating in the OSSI. She said the small schools model had increased their ability to forge relationships with students and increased student’s ability to achieve in school. She reported that the OAKS test scores had increased, the drop-out rate had been reduced. She highlighted the structure in the school, which focused on project based learning. She said when polling students to find out if they felt comfortable approaching a staff person with problems and 100 percent responded in the affirmative. She had formerly felt more isolated from her teaching colleagues but the OSSI model had brought them together as teams and this had been a positive development in her career.

Diane Downey said she taught in the IHS. She believed the OSSI had developed a strong sense of community in the schools and this helped the kids achieve academically. She stated that the small format had enabled teachers to improve the relationships between each other; it made it easy to talk to a teacher about integrated curriculum. She related that they often met in grade level teams so they could integrate curriculum horizontally as well as vertically. She noted that research indicated that teachers who got together to teach and develop curriculum improved student rigor and achievement. She said their discussions regarding individual students were in-depth and it helped students feel like they had adult figures who cared about them. She also felt the SSI model had helped in that every one of the administrators knew the names of the students and if a parent called, the administrator would be able to speak about the student. She stated that the SSI format had made it so almost everyone in the building had some kind of leadership position and there was not the hierarchy that had been in place prior to becoming small schools. She reiterated that the small school model made it so no teacher or student could fall through the cracks.

Ann, a junior from the School of IDEAS, said having teachers for more than one year helped them feel closer with them. She considered them to almost be a second family because of spending so much time in the classes. She knew she could talk to any of her teachers about any problem and they would be available to help her. She felt she knew her classmates better, too, because she had so many classes with them. She related that teachers encouraged students to do better and get into the advanced category.

Thomas, a junior from the IHS, stated that the schools had three distinctly different student mentor systems responsible for bringing in the new 9th graders and making them feel welcome. He related that the IHS had their version of The Amazing Race. He had seen students in middle school that fell through the cracks. He felt that students could have gone through North Eugene High School before the SSI was instituted and found a level of anonymity that would
allow them to get through school without ever being motivated by teaching staff to achieve. He stated that students became very familiar with one another because they were in class together in small school situations. He commented that there was "a lot of love at North Eugene High School" because of the small school structure. He had seen kids take AP classes that he would not have imagined taking that level of classes when they were in middle school together. He averred that the academic level of the school had improved greatly.

Courtney Wise, student at the Academy of Arts, said there was a bond that grew between students in all grades. She averred that if someone felt they did not fit in and they did not reach out to anyone, then someone would reach out to them. She believed there was a sense of family fostered by the small schools model. She also said students were able to become closer to teachers because they had classes with them more than once. She commented that she felt she could go to any teacher at North and get help if she needed it. She had heard the Academy of Arts was perceived to have a lighter curriculum than the other two but she disagreed. She felt that being in the Academy of Arts had helped her discover herself and grow. She hoped that every student in North could create something they were proud of and own it.

Cody Rosenberg, math teacher for the Academy of Arts, noted that one issue that had been brought up in the report on the small schools had been teacher burnout. He did not know of any teachers anywhere who did not have a little burnout. He pointed out that most teachers worked in the evenings and on weekends during the school year. He said the difference at North was that teachers felt empowered by the work they did; they felt more connected to the school. He related that teachers worked to figure out what to do in order to develop their teaching processes for their students and they collaborated because they felt it was their school. He considered small schools to be "an amazing model," and a place where they could start thinking about how to transform schools and how to get down to what students were interested in and where their passions lay. He declared that finding these things was what got the kids to school.

Ms. Walston expressed her appreciation for their visit to the meeting. She had gone to North the previous week. She agreed that small schools were an example of possible changes that could be made. She felt that the model fostered teacher accountability. She was enthused about the changes that had been made at North.

Mr. Smith thanked them for coming before the board and commended the students for being articulate.

The team from North received a round of applause.

**ITEMS RAISED BY THE AUDIENCE**

**Pamela Gutierrez**, mother of three children in 4J schools, stated that her family had moved to Eugene in part because of Crest Drive Elementary School. She urged the board not to close the school. She related that at the Mayor's Forum on the previous evening many speakers had made the point that great schools were critical to the economic viability for the community. She said the quality of education was a key factor for families being recruited into the area. She considered Crest Drive to be a "jewel in the crown of 4J." She predicted that southwest hills neighborhoods and businesses would suffer if the district lost Crest Drive. She wondered if the criteria for school closure or the assumptions made around them were outdated. She urged them to revisit them. She said if the closure was approved, there would be no neighborhood school in the Churchill region located south of 23rd Avenue, but there would be a cluster of three schools all within one block of one another further north. She suggested that those
schools could be better positioned geographically for a merger. She cited, as an example, that putting Adams Elementary School and the Academy of Technology and Arts (ATA) elementary together would create a student population that was roughly the size of Crest Drive and that could be housed in the ATA building. She also advocated for enlarging the boundaries for Crest Drive to allow better access to an outstanding ranked school for lower income families and utilizing the school property for expansion. She encouraged the district to forego the $1 million in savings that would be garnered from closing four schools. She considered this to be a drop in the bucket financially, adding that implementing the plan could create a hostile environment for the incoming superintendent and could perhaps leave an even bigger hole in the budget as parents pulled their kids out of the public schools.

Christy Gonenne said while she appreciated the board members willingness to take on this thankless job, she had deep concerns about the direction the district was headed. She felt that they were in the unique position of trying to attract and retain students and to maintain quality education while making major cuts. She said the district needed to expand and learn from its strengths and cut its losses. She felt the current proposal did just the opposite. She opined that if the district valued excellence, then it should keep experienced teaching teams, proven writing programs, and strong communities intact. She asserted that Crest Drive led the district in writing test scores. She believed it was the top performing school in the Churchill region. She noted that one assumption was that consolidating schools would make them better and more equitable and this went against national research and ignored the success of small schools locally. She did not think efficiency of costs equaled effectiveness. She believed the district should retain small schools throughout the district rather than big schools in clustered areas. She thought they should use the choice schools’ success as a model for the district. She pointed out that the district would lose $6,000 in state funding for every student they lost from the district. She believed the district could potentially lose as much or more than school closures would gain in lost enrollment.

Judy Volta shared that there was a strong concern in Coburg about keeping a viable school in their town. She said this time, because the school had been on the closure list a number of times due to its size and distance, they had decided to come to the district with a proposal to allow them to operate a charter school. She related that the focus would be a community immersion school. She asked them to seriously look at this and allow them to continue to have an elementary presence in their town. She read a letter in support of the charter application, submitted by Molly Smith.

Dave Wines said he had appreciated the discussion that had been held during the joint work session. He related that he had taught at Crest Drive for the past 8 years. He said he looked at the four bullet points in the recommendation for school closures, the first of which was enrollment. He averred that Crest Drive had continued to have strong enrollment. He thought the school, with 27 students per classroom, could house about 300 students. He said even though there had been talk of closing Crest Drive the previous year, the enrollment had increased. He believed Crest Drive was a strong school in the Churchill region. He recalled the closure of Bailey Hill Elementary and said if they closed Twin Oaks and Crest Drive it would be akin to abandoning an entire area of town. He stated that Crest Drive had been built with the idea that it could be expanded. He suggested they expand the school and increase enrollment. He also expressed concern about how students could be transported from that area to other schools.

Nancy Willard reiterated her feelings about equity and choice. She declared that they had to focus on equity in the community. She intended to file a complaint with the Department of
Education office of civil rights. She had maintained a record of data that supported her argument that the district favored choice over equity. She asserted that the alternative schools were all segregated.

**Donna McFarland** wanted to save Crest Drive Elementary from closure. She said she was a big believer in public schools and her father had spent his entire career working in the public schools. She had researched all of the schools and had chosen Crest Drive and she and her family had purchased a home within walking distance of the school. She could not believe she might have to do this all over again. She asked that they wait a year before they undertake closures. She said if they waited they would have a new superintendent, they would know if the bond measure will have passed and whether the Mayor's efforts to put a revenue-raising measure into place would work. She did not think it was fair to the kids for them to "get bumped around." She did not want her son "ripped away" from his friends and was considering moving him to a private or charter school. She believed other parents would take their kids out of the district as well and the district would lose additional revenue.

**Mike Wehr** related that the University of Oregon had just been through changes in leadership and he wanted to give his experience regarding the transition. He said they had not tried to implement large-scale changes just before the transition. He averred that new leaders wanted to inherit a stable structure so they could get "the lay of the land." He felt that newly appointed university president Richard Lariviere had laid low for the first six months and then had come up with a plan for a partnership between the state and the whole university system. He felt that engaging in school closures just as the superintendent and assistant superintendent were leaving would generate uncertainty and instability in the district. He believed it would impair the ability of incoming leadership to understand how the district worked. He was concerned that this kind of instability could even scare away the kind of talent that might take the reins in this situation.

**Beth Nitkowski** thanked the board for their work and their passion. She felt that a shared focus and vision was what made a school district successful. She believed that Crest Drive Elementary was a gem of a school. She opined that Crest Drive was perceived to do well because of the kids that attended there. She thought that perception did a disservice to all schools. She disagreed with the assertion that equity could not exist within the context of choice. She hoped that if change had to happen, it would be in a thoughtful and focused way. She hoped they would be able to keep that community of teachers together.

**Bethani Mayberry** said Crest Drive was their neighborhood school. She echoed sentiments regarding the closure of Twin Oaks and Crest Drive and the gap it would leave in that area of town. She did not think it made sense to move to three elementary schools clustered together. It troubled her that other areas of the district enjoyed the benefits of neighborhood schools given that the district had indicated that bringing students toward the core of the city was one rationale for closing those schools. She related that her boys enjoyed walking to school. She thought Crest Drive and Parker could remain vital schools beyond the next anticipated budget cuts. She hoped they would consider the importance the schools had for the communities and that once a school was closed, it would be gone.

**Jules DiGiulio**, father of a 4th grader at Crest Drive, said he was able to walk to their "chosen neighborhood school." He felt that children were their future and that they could do better for them. He asserted that the consensus among the nation's top education leaders was that small schools with reasonable student/teacher ratios located in neighborhood settings provided the ultimate education experience. He related that one key element, too, was parental involvement.
He averred that the other elements contributing to school success were the stability of the principal, teaching and administrative staff. He declared that all of these successful elements were present in Crest Drive. He favored boundary changes over school closures and consolidations. He asked that they not "confuse Eugene with a failing inner-city system." He averred that they needed to develop more inventive funding mechanisms.

Joan Obie noted that Ms. Boyd had discussed the ratio in elementary schools and high schools. She thought they could make the change in student teacher ratio easier to adjust to at the high school level. She averred that there was still a large class selection; her daughter had graduated from Churchill and had completed all of her science and math requirements for college. She believed that the college level classes could be taught like a college class by putting more kids into those classes and leaving the classes for students who struggle more for smaller numbers of kids. She thought they would need more central coordination to ensure that this was happening. She shared the board's concern about the budget assumption. She also agreed that the district should take a closer look at choice, but she did not believe all choice should be eliminated.

Joshua Burstein did not think closing Crest Drive Elementary was a good idea. He said many kids were scared of what would happen if the school closed. He echoed the sentiment that closing the one school south of 23rd Avenue and moving the kids to a more clustered set of schools was unwise. He also thought closing Crest Drive would contribute to the destabilization of the Churchill High School area. He asserted that the charter schools were costing $2.4 million per year. He said the language immersion schools and the Family School were all lottery programs. He agreed that the district needed to discuss choice and how it could be implemented and maintain equity at the same time. He stated that the Adams Elementary boundary held 458 students, but it only drew 135 to the school. He noted that 31 Adams kids went to Crest. He averred that this left 292 kids who would not be able to do their neighborhood school if Crest Drive was consolidated with Adams. He asked that the district increase class size at Crest Drive and change the boundary to support that.

CONSENT GROUP -- ITEMS FOR ACTION

MOTION: Mr. Torrey, seconded by Ms. Hays, moved to approve the Items in the Consent Group.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously, 6:0.

Approve Board Meeting Minutes

The superintendent recommended approval of the minutes from the October 6, 2010, and October 20, 2010, regular board meetings. Copies of the minutes were included in the board packet.

Approve the District Technology Plan for 2010-2013

Action Proposed
Approve the District Technology Plan 2010-2013.

Background
Every couple of years the district updates its District Technology Plan. The plan is then sent to the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) for review and approval. Districts with approved
Technology Plans are eligible for federal e-rate funds as well as other federal dollars. This plan is for the three year period 2010-2013. The following excerpt from the plan explains the basis upon which this plan is founded.

"This Technology Plan is intended to be a guiding document for the implementation and use of both administrative and instructional technology by the Eugene School District 4J. This plan, like its predecessor, is for a three year period. The choice of a three year planning period is predicated on the rapid change of technology and the uncertainty of funding in the future. Of course these actions will take place within budget constraints and annual modifications.

This current Technology Plan is based on the Superintendent Goals and the District Continuous Improvement Plan. A recent District Technology Focus Groups states:

Our Values
- We believe that technology is key to the instructional needs for all students.
- We believe that technology is key to the operational needs of the school district.

Our Beliefs
- ALL students and staff must have equal access to technology.
- Comprehensive and ongoing professional development opportunities are provided for all staff.
- Technology infrastructure must have sufficient capacity and reliability to support the teaching and learning and operations of the district.
- Technical support must meet the needs of all users.

This district technology plan attempts to strike a balance between network infrastructure, instructional technology, and administrative needs. The wide area network, associated servers, and connections to other networks comprise the primary communication infrastructure of the school district. The bandwidth (i.e. speed and capacity), reliability, and accessibility of this infrastructure should be virtually invisible to the end users. Commercial software with custom programmed modifications and solutions must adequately address the district's administrative needs. A 21st Century paradigm of professional development using technology for teaching and learning is being more fully developed, implemented, and assessed. The integration of technology as an instructional tool needs to continue with greater access by all students and staff from home as well as at school."

Recommendation
The superintendent has recommended that this plan be approved and adopted by the board. An online copy of the plan is located at http://www.4j.lane.edu/cis. An executive summary of the plan was included in the board packet.

Approve Personnel Items

The superintendent recommended approval of the personnel items included in the board packet. These covered employment, resignations, and other routine personnel matters. The board could adjourn to executive session for matters dealing with employment if it desired to do so. ORS 192.660 (2) (a)
ITEMS FOR ACTION AT THIS MEETING

Approve a Resolution Adopting the 2011 OSBA Legislative Policies and Priorities

**Action Proposed:** Approve the 2011 Legislative Policies and Priorities, as proposed by the Oregon School Boards Association.

A copy of the proposed 2011 OSBA legislative policies was included in the board packet.

At a previous meeting, the board indicated interest in defining more specific legislation that would be beneficial to schools, especially in light of state financial forecasts that predict significant and continuing resource challenges for Oregon schools and state-funded services over the next decade. A draft of possible 4J Board positions and legislation to monitor was attached. This draft was shared with Lane County legislators at a breakfast with the board on November 30.

In addition, the Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) has developed a "Regional Voice" statement to be presented to legislators in January. The Regional Voice positions were endorsed by the LCOG Board as a means of giving voice to a set of top priorities that are shared by our local public agencies, including school districts. The four Regional Voice positions are:

1. opposition to the State's charging for local government access to the criminal justice data system, LEDS,
2. support for proposed revisions of the local option levy,
3. support for pre-paid cell phone tax collection for 911 fee, and
4. support for the initiation of a multi-session discussion to bring about an overhaul of the currently broken state property tax system.

**Background:** Before every regular session of the Oregon Legislature, the Oregon School Boards Association (OSBA) drafts a set of policies and priorities that set direction for legislative advocacy and serve as a set of criteria against which to evaluate legislative proposals.

The OSBA has asked its member school districts to formally endorse these policies and priorities by approving a resolution.

The three proposed 2011 OSBA Legislative Priorities are:

- Student achievement,
- Shared accountability for student success, and
- Adequate and stable funding for schools, including state and local tax reform that would increase support for schools.

**Discussion:**

**Rationale:** By approving the OSBA Legislative Policies and Priorities, the board is choosing to join with other school boards throughout the state in defining and advocating for a common agenda that would benefit K-12 public schools.

By defining a set of 4J Board Legislative Positions, board members and staff can have more specific conversations with our local legislators about potential legislation that would benefit the district.
Options and Alternatives: The board could decline to approve the 2011 OSBA Legislative Policies and Priorities. OSBA has asked member districts to cast a vote either in support or opposition to the resolution. The board could formally approve the 4J Board Positions at its December 15 meeting or could choose to simply use this list in conversations with legislators.

Budget/Resource Implications: There were no budget impacts from approving the resolution.

Board and Superintendent Goals: This actions would support Board Goal #3 Stakeholder Engagement and the key result which states: "In 2010-11, the board will work with other local school districts, the Lane County legislative delegation, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, other elected officials, OSBA and other groups to secure adequate and stable state school funding for the 2011-13 biennium and to advocate for legislation in support of increased student achievement and local control of schools."

Recommendation
The superintendent has recommended approval of the 2011 OSBA Legislative Priorities and will make a recommendation on 4J Board Legislative Positions, should the board wish to take formal action.

MOTION: Ms. Gerot, seconded by Ms. Geller, moved to approve the OSBA Legislative Policies.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously, 6:0.

Ms. Bellamy called for a vote on the legislative priorities, which she had organized under three headings: strengthen funding stability for schools, help school districts reduce costs or avoid cost increases, and to support the schools in serving students who need special services.

MOTION: Ms. Gerot, seconded by Ms. Walston, moved to approve the OSBA Legislative Priorities.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously, 6:0

Ms. Walston asked if Ms. Bellamy needed a motion to approve going forward with the Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) "Regional Voice" statement. Ms. Bellamy confirmed that the board would need to approve it for the district to sign on to the statement.

MOTION: Ms. Walston, seconded by Ms. Gerot, moved to approve the "Regional Voice" statement to be presented to state legislators in January.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously, 6:0

Approve Resolutions Amending the OSBA Constitution

Action Proposed: Approve the following resolution, submitted by the OSBA Board of Directors to member districts:

- A resolution to amend the OSBA Constitutions, Article 7, Section 2, regarding the Legislative Policy Committee membership and Article 9, Section 1, describing the association.
• A resolution to amend the OSBA Constitution Article 4, Section 2, regarding membership, dues, and assessments.

The two resolutions were included in the board packet.

The OSBA has asked its member school districts to formally endorse these policies and priorities by approving the resolutions.

Recommendation
The superintendent recommended approval of the resolutions.

MOTION: Ms. Gerot, seconded by Ms. Walston, moved to approve the resolutions amending the OSBA Constitution.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously, 6:0

Approve a Revision to Policy JECC, School Choice

Action Proposed: Approve a one-year revision to Board Policy JECC School Choice to adjust the timeline for accepting school choice applications that would be considered in the lottery for the 2011-12 school year. This would postpone the school choice application period in 2011 to begin on Monday, February 7, 2011, instead of Monday January 3. The closing date for receiving applications to be considered in the lottery would be Friday, April 22, 2011 rather than Friday, March 18.

A copy of the proposed policy revision was included in the board packet.

Background: Board policy JECC describes the process for requesting enrollment at a district alternative school or a neighborhood school outside of the attendance area in which a student resides. Each spring, a lottery is conducted to establish a waiting list for each school for the next school year. The policy specifies that, in order for an application to be considered in the lottery, it must be submitted to the district "between the first working day in January and the Friday preceding spring break in March."

Discussion:
Rationale: The superintendent has proposed closing and consolidating a number of schools as part of the preliminary recommendations for achieving a sustainable budget. Final recommendations will be presented to the board for action in late January. Due to the possible changes in schools and attendance areas, staff recommends postponing the timeline for school choice applications and the lottery that is conducted in 2011 for the 2011-12 school year.

Options and Alternatives: The board could maintain the existing policy and timeline for 2011 or choose a different timeline than staff has proposed.

Budget/Resource Implications: There are no resource impacts.

Board and Superintendent Goals: This policy revision does not directly support a board or superintendent goal, although it relates to the timeline for developing sustainable budget strategy.
Recommendation
The superintendent has recommended approval of the one-year policy revision.

MOTION: Ms. Hays, seconded by Ms. Walston, moved to approve the revision to Policy JECC regarding the deadlines for School Choice.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously, 6:0

Adopt the 2010-11 Superintendent's Goal Statement and Establish the Criteria for the 2010-11 Annual Evaluation

The contract between the superintendent and the board states that the board will evaluate the superintendent at least once each year based on the goals and objectives agreed upon by the board and the superintendent, and the terms of their contract. ORS 192.660 (2) (i) requires and School Board Policy CBB states that the standards criteria and policy directives to be used in evaluating the superintendent shall have been adopted by the board in meetings open to the public no later than January of each year.

Superintendent Russell proposed that the criteria to be used in his annual evaluation consist of the agreed upon goals, the contract between the superintendent and the board, the position description contained in School Board Policy CBA, and a Self-Evaluation Feedback form. A draft copy of his proposed 2010-11 goals statement, which was based upon the board annual agenda and goals were included in the board packet. They will be subject to revision based upon suggested modification by the board, and further review by the superintendent's staff.

Since the December 1 board meeting, Superintendent Russell revised the draft goals pertaining to achieving a sustainable budget to state that the strategy he presented would present a path for achieving a sustainable budget by 2014-15 rather than 2012-13. This assumes that the board is willing to also adjust the timeline that is stated in the board goal. In addition, he included a superintendent goal that addressed implementation of the board sustainable budget strategy, following board approval of a strategy in January.

Superintendent Russell briefly highlighted the specific revisions to the sustainable budget goal. He said the board would have to be willing to revise its goal regarding sustainable budget in tandem with the superintendent’s goals. He stated that there was also a piece in the goals that indicated that the present superintendent would work with the new superintendent to determine the 2011-12 budget and the organizational priorities and the development of a transitional strategy.

Ms. Walston asked if the board should revise its goals first and then move to approve the superintendent's goal statement.

Ms. Bellamy thought this would be the best way to proceed and Superintendent Russell agreed to bring the statement back for approval at the next meeting.

COMMENTS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS BY INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS

Mr. Torrey said he had read all of the emails sent to him. He thanked everyone for their input.

Ms. Gerot reported that she had attended the biannual National School Board Association (NSBA) Pacific region meeting. She said she and Kevin McCann, executive director of the
OSBA, had provided a presentation on the equity work that OSBA was doing. She stated that the NSBA had provided the opportunity to talk about what the various associations were doing toward the goal/strategic plan to have a unified national voice to build support for public education in the media and in the public. She noted that she had been elected Vice Chair of the Pacific Region. She had read the book *Stretching the School Dollar* while she was on her way to the meeting and recommended it.

Mr. Smith stated that Ms. Gerot had also received a distinguished service award. He said the district was very proud of her.

Ms. Hays thanked everyone for coming out to the forum held on the previous night. She added that she wanted to wish her son a happy 17th birthday.

Ms. Walston thought the conversation with the Budget Committee had been insightful and one of the best ones she had participated in. She also wanted to thank the students for their participation in the meeting. She reported that she had attended the LCOG meeting in Mr. Torrey's stead and in addition to the "Regional Voice" they had also talked about the increase in their rates, which were based on the number of students for the district, and that with declining enrollment the district would be paying less.

Ms. Walston related that she had gone to the Career and College Center opening at North Eugene High School. She said the principal had commended the facilities staff for the remodeling work they had done to the space. She thought they sometimes overlooked the infrastructure and the staff that took care of it. She added that the students at North had earned over 2000 college credit hours, which represented a great deal of savings.

Ms. Geller thanked her daughter for being understanding as she had missed her choir concert earlier in the evening. She had attended the Equity Committee meeting on the previous day. She anticipated that the committee would continue its participation in the discussion about the funding changes. She related that she had also been impressed by the Career and College Center. She also thanked the students for coming and speaking to them about the SSI.

Ms. Geller had found the school funding forum to be positive and receptive. She said the group that organized the forum met on the following day to debrief and talk about options. She thought the first step would be to determine the political viability of potential revenue measures. She had been impressed by that level of support the public had for the schools. She had read a book called *Shock of Gray* which was about the aging population around the world. She thought this was important as they thought about how to get the community plugged into the schools.

**ADJOURN**

Mr. Smith adjourned the meeting of the School District 4J School Board at 10:05 p.m.

______________________________  __________________________
George Russell     Craig Smith
District Clerk      Board Chair

*(Recorded by Ruth Atcherson)*
Attachments to Official Minutes:
1. Executive Summary – District Information Technology Plan
2. Personnel Information
3. Resolution to Adopt the Proposed 2011 OSBA Legislative Policies and Priorities
4. Resolution to Amend the OSBA Constitution
5. Membership, Dues and Assessments (OSBA)
6. School Choice – Policy JECC