

# MINUTES

School District 4J Budget Committee  
Education Center—200 North Monroe Street—Eugene, Oregon

December 14, 2009  
7 p.m.

PRESENT: Jennifer Geller, Chair; Betsy Boyd, Shirley Clark, Beth Gerot, Tim Gleason, Pete Gribskov, Alicia Hays, Wendy Laing, Ann Marie Levis, Craig Smith, Debra Smith, Jim Torrey, Mary Walston, members; George Russell, Superintendent of Schools; Carl Hermanns, Barb Bellamy, Susan Fahey, Caroline Passerotti, Celia Feres-Johnson, Christine Nesbit, Jeralynn Beghetto, Larry Sullivan, Les Moore, School District 4J staff.

ABSENT: Carla Gary, Vice Chair.

## I. Roll Call

Ms. Geller called the roll.

## II. Items Raised by the Audience

**Joy Marshall**, representative of Stand for Children and a district parent, thanked the committee for its work on behalf of the district and its children. She also thanked those members who had been volunteering in support of ballot measures 66 and 67 and urged the committee to get the word out to the community about the impact of the measures on the district. She asked the committee to show leadership, learn all it could about the measures, and to think about what more it could do in regard to community education about the measures. She tied the issue of outreach to the board's mission of community engagement. Ms. Marshall believed that there was general misunderstanding about the impact of the measures on business. She maintained that the measures were modest and fair to businesses. Ms. Marshall noted for the benefit of board members present that several Oregon school boards had passed resolutions in support of the two measures and distributed a list of districts that had done so.

## III. Items for Information and Discussion

Superintendent Russell reviewed the contents of the meeting packet and emphasized that the information was provided for the committee's context as it prepared for the upcoming budget review.

### A. Board Guiding Beliefs and Values; Board Goals and Annual Agenda

### B. Superintendent's Goals

Superintendent Russell provided a PowerPoint presentation, copies of which were provided to the committee and made available to the audience, highlighting the board's goals and the key results that the board had identified as outcomes for each goal. He also reviewed the superintendent's goals associated with each board goal.

Mr. Gleason asked if the district had any sense of the cost of achieving the board's goals; for example, to provide additional resources for students not on track. Superintendent Russell indicated that to this point,

discussion had been driven by what had been available versus the ideal. Many decisions were driven by deficit models in terms of resources, rather than asset models. He thought the committee would have more discussion about that.

### **C. Shaping 4J's Future**

Superintendent Russell provided a PowerPoint presentation on the *Shaping 4J's Future* strategic planning process. He reviewed the process goals and principles and his initial recommendations, his revised recommendations, and the current status of each recommendation adopted by the board of directors.

### **D. Focusing on Teaching and Learning**

Superintendent Russell provided members with a PowerPoint presentation entitled *Focus on Teaching and Learning* to update the committee on the district's ExEL work and provide members with some context for future discussions.

### **E. 2009-10 Instructional Leadership Team (LT) Goals and Instructional Priorities**

Mr. Hermanns shared the Leadership Team's Instructional Priorities.

Superintendent Russell indicated he would ask the committee to help the district be more discerning in making some of the tough choices that the district must make if the ballot measures intended to shore up State funding failed.

Ms. Geller invited questions on the materials that had been presented.

Ms. Smith wanted to avoid cuts to professional development but acknowledged that it was difficult not to make such cuts in the face of public pressure. She pointed out, however, that the district continued to ask staff to do more with less, which did not make sense. Ms. Smith said that those types of reductions were brought to the committee last year, and she speculated it was due to public pressure and the committee's expectations such cuts would be offered. She said if staff believed such reductions should be avoided, she wanted to hear that. She suggested that part of making the hard choices was to say that there were areas of the budget where the committee did not want to make cuts. Superintendent Russell agreed with Ms. Smith, but suggested that the issue came down to the importance of professional development when compared with other district expenditures. He asked if, for example, it was better for the district to have professional development and class sizes of 40 students, or no professional development and smaller class sizes. Superintendent Russell said that the survey data pointed staff in certain directions. He would try to help the committee understand the trade offs involved in the choices available to the district.

Ms. Gerot said that the way professional development had been provided in the past was not necessarily a good use of dollars, and until the district had more coherence it may not be using its professional development in the most optimum way.

Ms. Walston commended the presentation and suggested it set the tone for future decisions.

Ms. Clark also commended the presentation. She believed that the committee's decisions needed to be in the context of a design. She said that planning efforts had involved considerable engagement with the public, and those participants would need to be reminded that the process was part of an ongoing flow and the committee was not picking up the "apples that had fallen off the tree or the ones we could reach" in the event reductions were needed. She had been pleased to see how far the district had gone in implementing the direction that came out of *Shaping 4J's Future* process. She also commended Superintendent Russell

for explaining why it was not wise to carry out some of the recommendations because of changing conditions or a lack of resources, as she thought that spoke to the issue of accountability and the fact that processes are dynamic in nature.

#### **F. Community Outreach Regarding Budget Issues**

Ms. Geller noted that she had invited e-mail suggestions about the issue of public input and had received responses from Mr. Torrey and Ms. Laing. Ms. Laing had suggested the committee use *The Register-Guard* op-ed process, and Mr. Torrey had reminded the committee of the importance of defining key terms for the public and letting the public know how district money was currently spent.

Ms. Bellamy shared the staff recommendation for public outreach for the upcoming budget process, included in a document provided to the committee entitled *2010-11 Budget Process—Public Input Options*. She discussed the schedule for the survey, suggesting the survey begin the last week of February and the committee meet on March 15 to hear the results of the public input.

Ms. Geller invited comment.

Ms. Boyd suggested that the Web surveys and community forums be designed to get information to people about what they need to know about the schools so they can understand the decisions that were made by the committee. She thought that including a qualitative element in the survey that did not call for the respondent to answer all questions would be useful, and suggested a question regarding what people were seeing in the schools or thought they were seeing. Speaking to Mr. Hermanns' presentation, which spoke to changing the culture in instructional practices, Ms. Boyd thought the district had valuable assets in site councils and Title I parent-teacher compacts, which she believed had been challenging areas for the district to meaningfully engage. She suggested the district charge the site councils and the Title I committees to look at some of the decisions the committee would be contemplating. Ms. Boyd believed that would require some sort of iterative device that those entities could employ in that task.

Mr. Gribskov perceived two reasons for the committee to continue to meet: to receive public testimony from interested parents and other citizens and to learn why people did not support school funding. He said that the district needed to reach out to people who did not support school and State funding measures. He noted unhappiness among many members of the business community in regard to the funding mechanism referred to the ballot. He did not think the district was hearing from people who did not have children in school. Mr. Gribskov suggested each committee member recruit three or four friends and neighbors and listen to why they are unhappy and did not support the ballot measures.

Ms. Levis suggested that the district reach out in different ways to encourage residents to fill out Web surveys and consider ways to involve citizens in the community who do not have children in school. She suggested that the district employ social media to get people to fill out the Web surveys. She said she would like to double or triple the survey response to really find out what people cared about and to raise community awareness about the issue of school funding.

Superintendent Russell recalled that the last survey included responses from some residents without children, although Ms. Bellamy confirmed most were parents.

Responding to a question from Mr. Smith about the timing of the process, Ms. Bellamy envisioned that the survey would be focused on the next budget. She did not think the district could do anything before the January election.

Ms. Geller solicited committee input on the staff recommendation. There was support for the timing

proposed by Ms. Bellamy.

Ms. Geller solicited committee input on the proposed forums and Web survey.

Ms. Hays challenged staff to do things differently. She wanted to look at services in a different way and challenged the committee to do the same. She feared that the problem with the forums was that participants would be focused on reducing what was in place, instead of looking at what was in place and talking about how the district could build the best system possible.

Ms. Boyd thought the survey was critical and should be more sophisticated than the survey done last year. She urged staff to look at qualitative themes rather than individual programs and their costs. She said the district should use the forums to inform the community about its other choices. She was concerned that otherwise, the committee would not be discerning in its choices.

Ms. Smith believed the district needed to manage community expectations. She said if the district asked the public the same questions it asked before it would get the same answers. She was not sure she wanted to conduct a survey, pointing out the public counted on the committee to make the community's hard decisions. She did not think the public was sufficiently well-informed about the complexity of the funding picture to offer anything other than what it had before. She agreed with Ms. Boyd that the questions should be different kinds of questions and not specifically focused on reductions.

Ms. Geller suggested that a critical component of the work ahead was community education. People were busy and entered the conversation at different junctures, and she did not want the committee to lose sight of that. Those who were engaged or had opposing opinions might not have the complete picture.

#### **IV. Items for Action at this Meeting**

##### **A. Set Date for Next Budget Committee Meeting**

Ms. Levis, seconded by Mr. Smith, moved to schedule the next committee meeting for January 11, 2010. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **V. Items Raised by Members of the Budget Committee**

There were no other issues raised by members.

#### **VI. Adjournment**

Ms. Geller adjourned the meeting at 9:07 p.m.

*(Recorded by Kimberly Young)*