

# Bend-La Pine Schools

## Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

**Meeting Date:** January 12, 2021

### **Meeting Location:**

To support Governor Brown's executive orders for social distancing, the Board of Directors conducted the Board Meeting virtually, through Cisco WebEx. The meeting was also live streamed to the BLS Schoolboard YouTube webpage.

### **Board Members Present**

Carrie Douglass  
Shimiko Montgomery  
Melissa Barnes Dholakia  
Amy Tatom  
Caroline Skidmore  
Stuart Young  
Julie Craig

### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Chair Douglass, roll call followed. Chair Douglass noted the meeting will be translated simultaneously on the district's Spanish Facebook page.

### **Review of Agenda**

Chair Douglass reviewed the agenda. There were no changes. Douglass noted the Board plans to conduct the January 26 board meeting in person and also provide a livestream of the meeting for the public.

### **Superintendent's Comments**

Superintendent Nordquist shared that January is Board Appreciation Month and acknowledged Board member's commitment, dedication and leadership. She thanked them for their time, especially this year, leading through a pandemic and hiring a new superintendent, amongst many other important community and global issues.

### **Public Input**

Chair Douglass noted the Board received several submissions for public input, in written format, and the following comments were read aloud:

- Concern about return to in-person instruction: Ingrid Hoben, teacher at High Desert Middle School; Mariah Staats, parent and community member; Brock McCormick, parent; Nicole Brown, community member
- Support for continuing CDL: Jen Jennings, parent
- Support for returning to in-person instruction: Emma Parker, parent; Jessica & Tim Fraley, parents; Mandy Grisner, parent
- Return to school only after staff are vaccinated: James Williams, teacher at Summit High School

### **Consent Agenda**

**Melissa Barnes Dholakia moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Julie Craig seconded the motion. Unanimous approval.**

### **Discussion Items**

#### **❖ Superintendent Search**

Chair Douglass shared an update on the superintendent search and said the Board is excited to vote on offering a contract to the top candidate this evening. Douglass reviewed the process the Board engaged in over the past months. Douglass shared the Board's desire to make the finalist interviews as transparent as possible and noted

the virtual and recorded sessions that were made available for the interview committee, students, staff and community members to “meet” and provide feedback about finalists, Dr. Kristina Bellamy and Dr. Steven Cook.

Douglass said the Board is excited to extend a contract to Dr. Steven Cook.

Melissa Barnes Dholakia shared her enthusiasm for the opportunity to work with Dr. Cook and noted his qualifications and abilities to lead in the key competencies that the Board identified in the superintendent job description. Barnes Dholakia said over 800 community members provided detailed feedback about the finalists through a survey process and expressed her sincere thanks to community members for their interest and participation in the process.

Douglass agreed with Barnes Dholakia and shared her enthusiasm for Dr. Cook and asked Board members to share any comments. Amy Tatom noted Dr. Cook’s work with students in poverty and scientific background, and she looks forward to him bringing this experience and expertise to Bend-La Pine Schools. Shimiko Montgomery acknowledged and encouraged members of our community who desire a more diverse leader to reach out to the Board to continue to discuss equity efforts; she and noted Dr. Cook’s openness to the work before us and establishing accountability measures. Stuart Young shared his enthusiasm for Dr. Cook and feels that the district is headed in the right direction with the selection of Dr. Cook. Julie Craig welcomed Dr. Cook and offered to put forward a motion to extend a contract if there were no other comments.

**Julie Craig moved to name Dr. Steven Cook as the top candidate and extend a contract as Superintendent of Bend-La Pine Schools. Melissa Barnes Dholakia seconded to motion. Unanimous approval.**

Chair Douglass encouraged staff and community members to welcome and support Dr. Cook as he begins to transition into his new leadership role.

#### ❖ **Budget Committee Vacancies**

Chair Douglass noted the executive summary in the Board packet and discussion ensued on the next steps for the three members whose terms have ended.

**Amy Tatom moved to reappoint Tom Bahrman and Sharon Bellusci to a three-year term on the Bend-La Pine School’s Budget Committee and to advertise the vacant seat to the community. Caroline Skidmore seconded the motion. Unanimous approval.**

Amy Tatom and Caroline Skidmore volunteered to help lead the interview process. Chair Douglass noted this is an excellent way to be involved in the district and can also be an excellent learning opportunity for those who might be interested in becoming a Board member. Melissa Barnes Dholakia expressed her thanks to Heidi Slaybaugh for her service and the expertise she brought while serving as on the Budget Committee.

#### **Action Item**

##### ❖ **Approval of Alternative Learning Options Contracts**

Melissa Barnes Dholakia shared her appreciation for all ALO partners and the options and programs they provide to students. She appreciated hearing highlights from each of the programs at the December meeting. **Melissa Barnes Dholakia moved to approve the recommendation to approve the Alternative Learning Option Contract and Charter School Evaluations as presented at the December 8, 2020 board meeting, and to approve new contracts for the 2021-22 school year for all the Contract and Charter Schools evaluated. Chair Douglass seconded the motion. Unanimous approval.**

#### **Reports**

##### ❖ **School Reopening Update**

Superintendent Nordquist welcomed Dr. Cook to Bend-La Pine Schools, adding she is excited to have him join the district and looks forward to working with him.

Nordquist noted Governor Brown’s recent announcement and change of school closure metrics moving to advisory rather than required and shared about the work district leadership has considered over the past weeks

in light of this announcement. Nordquist commented on the seriousness in which she, district leaders, and the Board take with COVID-19 while also balancing the negative impacts a remote learning environment can have on students, their learning, and their social-emotional wellbeing. Many students are not successful or actively participating in Comprehensive Distance Learning (CDL), with an estimated 45-50% of students not being engaged. She shared Deschutes County's COVID-19 metrics and said the district continues to monitor metrics on a daily basis while also making plans to return to in-person instruction. Nordquist added that the Ready Schools Safe Learners guidance will continue to be in place even with the new guidance from Governor Brown.

Nordquist shared the district's Return to In-Person Phase-In Plan, noting that the district's youngest students are beginning to transition into in-person instruction, and by February 8, all students will have an opportunity to be in-person, in some fashion, assuming we continue to meet the metrics. Skip Offenhauser, Jim Boen and Katie Legace shared about what to expect regarding student cohorts, attendance schedules, in-person instruction, remote instruction, transportation, etc. at the elementary, middle school and high school levels, respectively.

Nordquist addressed the concerns heard from families who do not want their student to return to in-person instruction nor transition to the Bend-La Pine Online program. In late December, the district became aware of additional federal funding and has decided to create a District CDL option, for grades K-12. Nordquist reviewed what the District CDL program will be like at the elementary, middle and high school levels and noted more information be sent to families in the next days.

Paul Dean shared about safety preparations at schools and how concerns or complaints can be reported. He thanked principals and district leadership for their tremendous efforts in creating and establishing safety plans. Dean also thanked Sarah Barclay, BEA President, for her partnership in visiting schools and setting up classrooms across the district. Dean shared about additional staffing the district continues to hire in an effort to help support the return to in-person instruction.

Nordquist acknowledged and thanked Julianne Repman for her leadership in the vaccination efforts for Deschutes County. Repman shared about the COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee, Deschutes County Health Department and community partners and the huge lift they are taking to get as many community members in the 1A and 1B groups vaccinated. She shared that Governor Brown just announced that all K-12 staff members are eligible for vaccines starting January 12. Staff members have been notified and are able to make appointments at upcoming vaccination clinics which will be held at the Deschutes County Fairgrounds. Repman also commented on the district's process for contact tracing and communication efforts established district-wide.

Board members asked staff questions about the following:

- Return to school plans
- Vaccination efforts
- Contact tracing and how the district and community partners are working together to share information and communication
- Quarantine regulations for students, cohorts and staff
- Disciplinary measures and educational efforts for students/staff who do not follow safety precautions
- Mask requirements and PPE supplies and distribution
- Travel advisory recommendations
- Ventilation systems and air filters
- Options for staff members who are not able or ready to return, including staffing and hiring of regular and substitute employees
- District CDL program and the possibility of students switching from CDL to in-person instruction later in the spring
- Elective courses available with the return to in-person instruction and limitations around classes like choir, band, PE that might be better to take place outside, weather permitting
- Lunch plans for staff and students at school

- Metrics, data and what other information will be considered by the district for delaying in-person instruction or shifting back CDL districtwide
- How teachers will continue to teach should a classroom have to quarantine and the use of the CDL model in response to quarantine

### **Board Comments**

Melissa Barnes Dholakia shared her appreciation for district staff and their efforts to answer all the questions tonight and their thoughtful approach to the planning and addressing the details of returning to school. She appreciated all of the expertise and distributed leadership exhibited tonight and the strength and depth of the leadership team.

Amy Tatom shared her hopes that our community limits gatherings, travel, etc. and continues to practice safe social measures as students return to school, keeping in mind the risks that a return to school could impose. She emphasized the importance of PPE in schools and thanked Repman for advocacy in the areas of safety and vaccinations.

Julie Craig thanked district leadership for answering questions and helping members of the community have a better understanding of their options. She encouraged community members to reach out if they have questions or concerns and hopes families feel a stronger comfort level after hearing about the options available to students. She also encouraged our community to stay vigilant in safety efforts to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Caroline Skidmore thanked Nordquist for the quick pivot to offer a District CDL program. She is grateful for the efforts made to pull it off and feels grateful for the additional option provided to families.

Chair Douglass echoed Board member's sentiments and believes the district can open schools safely. She noted successful experiences with Limited In Person Instruction, Parks and Recreation child care programs, the Boys & Girls Club program and day care options. She is excited about the vaccination news and that educators are being made a priority. She emphasized our community continues to practice safe social measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Reopening schools is a community effort and students need community-wide support to keep schools open.

Stuart Young thanked district leadership for the thorough responses. He noted the balance of returning to school and safety. He emphasized that schools will not look the same and we are in the midst of a massive pandemic, but we are fortunate to have strong leadership and feels positive about students returning to the classroom.

Shimiko Montgomery agreed that returning to in-person instruction is incredibly important, but feels the timing of our return is still a bit early; she would like to see metrics lower and staff vaccinations well underway before returning to any sort of in-person instruction. She also mentioned her desire to expand options to staff who are not ready or able to return to work and also thanked Nordquist for the creativity in implementing the District CDL program.

Douglass thanked Board members and staff for their time and commitment this evening and welcomed Dr. Cook again.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Recorded by: Andrea Wilson

**Minutes approved at 2.9.2021 board meeting**