



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
May 13, 2020**

**1.0 OPENING ITEMS**

**1.1 Meeting Date and Location:**

May 13, 2020 – via remote Zoom meeting.

**1.2 Call to Order/Roll Call:**

Mr. Benjamin called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. He acknowledged that this meeting, while attended from various locations, is being held on the ancestral homelands of the Coastal Salish people. Present: Directors Kelly Bashaw, Douglas Benjamin (President), Camille Diaz Hackler, Jenn Mason, Katie Rose, Superintendent Greg Baker and Sheri O'Day (recorder).

**1.3 Audience:**

Mr. Benjamin noted that, because of our current emergency status due to COVID-19, public participation is limited to written submissions only. Any written comments received will be shared with the school board directors.

**1.4 Superintendent's Announcements and Report:** Summary of Dr. Baker's comments:

- The district is continuing to operate under the unique circumstances of Covid-19. Dr. Baker has begun meeting with each school's staff at their virtual staff meetings. Last week's virtual conversation with the community was positive and well-received. He expects to hold another, but it has not yet been scheduled.
- Safety of students and staff continues to be the first priority, and staff and students remain at home, except for those staff members with essential functions. Some members of the community continue to express concern regarding the presence of the Lighthouse Mission at Bellingham High School. The rumors about millions of dollars of damage are false. Other community members have expressed appreciation for helping this vulnerable population. The facility agreement has an end date of August 1, although they may be transitioning to another location sooner than that.
- The provision of food and child care continue to go well. The Central Kitchen and food services staff are doing a great job. The district has partnered with the YMCA for child care, and today Dr. Baker visited the child care site at Parkview. Staff there are continuing with temperature checks, health questionnaires and social distancing and staff are wearing masks. These procedures could be used when students return to school.
- The grading policy for high school was announced. This was a large body of work, and we feel good with where we landed. It has been well received with people recognizing that it's not a perfect answer nor is it a long-term solution, but the good news is that our grading guidance has meant more engagement for some students and

less stress. Middle school and elementary school grading and report cards are being discussed; guidance will go out to staff soon. The goal is to keep kids engaged without a big assessment at the end of the school year.

- Professional development with a wellness focus has been offered to all staff, and 385 individuals have enrolled in 24 classes that staff has put together for their colleagues. The classes range from online First Aid/CPR certification; to Darkness to Light, which addresses breaking the cycle of child abuse; and using yoga skills in the classroom to address trauma and resilience. There are also some fun classes for connection and health, such as Zumba, mindfulness, martial arts and mid-day yoga.
- We continue the work to ensure every district family has access to technology and WiFi and have contracted with Comcast to help pay for services for families who have barriers. The family engagement team has helped with this effort, and the number of families without technology and WiFi access is down from over 300 to around 70.
- Messaging regarding graduation went out today. Following guidance from the state superintendent and the governor, we are confident that we will not be able to hold ceremonies indoors or outdoors. Dr. Baker noted that the Spokane School District has been informed by the governor that an outdoor stadium ceremony will not be allowed. Our team has put together a plan that puts safety first. If things change that could influence our thinking, we will adjust. We are thinking of it as a weeklong celebration rather than one ceremony, and a virtual ceremony is being planned for students and their families to watch.
- We are still planning to bring a proposed 2020-21 budget to the board at next month's regular meeting. There are still a lot of questions about what will happen long term with the budget. We will go into next school year hoping that the legislature does not change its budget mid-year. It is possible that we will see changes in the next biennial budget that could cause reductions, so we will continue to be conservative where we can. A year or two ago we went through the process of preparing for significant cuts, and the information we learned during that exercise will help to guide us if we get to that point.
- As an update to Special Education: Director of Teaching and Learning Mike Haberman, who was planning to reduce his role for 2020-21, will now stay on as director. Other supports in Special Education will also be put into place.
- As we wind down the 2019-20 school year, our energy will turn towards 2020-21. The dynamics are changing fast, and we have been reading guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other agencies. The state superintendent has formed a task force with over 100 people from around the state to give the governor guidance towards the end of June. The state superintendent has asked that we not make any decisions about next year until that guidance comes out. That guidance likely will be similar to the guidance on grading, in that there will be some parameters but also some flexibility. Possible models could include students being divided into morning and afternoon sessions; secondary students continuing with online learning; students alternating weekly or every two weeks, etc. It is a challenge, and when we closed schools on March 13 and had less than a week to flip our model, we did it. It will be a challenging summer as we make plans for next school year.

Dr. Baker was asked by a board member about capital projects, and he shared that all building projects are on schedule at this time.

He was also asked about the annual staff retirement celebration. Instead of the dinner and celebration that has occurred in past years, we will be honoring our retirees in other ways. We hope to them all together at some point next year, perhaps with the 2020-21 group of retirees, or with a celebration for each group.

## **2.0 CONSENT ITEMS:**

Ms. Mason made a **motion**, seconded by Ms. Bashaw, to approve the following consent agenda items:

- 2.1 Approval of Minutes of the April 22, 2020 Regular Meeting**
- 2.2 Approval of Expenditures and Payroll – April 2020**
- 2.3 Resolution 6-20, Emergency Waiver of School Days and Instructional Hours**
- 2.4 Approve Alderwood Elementary School Value Engineering Study**
- 2.5 Approve Parkview Elementary School Value Engineering Study**
- 2.6 Authorization to Call for Bids – Parkview Elementary School**
- 2.7 Annual Affirmative Action Progress Report**
- 2.8 Facility Agreements with Lighthouse Mission Ministries (#1920-154A), Whatcom County (#1920-156 & #1920-156A) and Whatcom Family YMCA (#1920-155)**
- 2.9 Washington Reading Corps Agreement (#1920-157)**
- 2.10 Comcast Cable Communications Management Agreement (#1920-159)**
- 2.11 Whatcom Detention Center Education Program Interlocal Cooperative Agreement (#2021-001)**
- 2.12 Personnel Recommendations**

Unanimous affirmative vote.

## **3.0 INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

### **3.1 School Board Directors' Reports. Highlights of comments:**

- Ms. Diaz Hackler shared that she has nothing to report but wants to thank Dr. Baker and his team for all that they are doing. She has heard from friends who have school-aged children how difficult it is, and she appreciates the tough decisions that Dr. Baker and his team have had to make. It is a tough time for everyone.
- Ms. Bashaw noted that she also has heard positive feedback from people who have students in the district. She thanked Dr. Baker and the Executive Team, who are all working to do the best for students and families.
- Ms. Mason appreciated the Promise award video and last week's virtual conversation with Dr. Baker. The communications team made the video very special, and she knows there was a lot of work behind the scenes to put that together and recognize staff. She also applauded the network services team for their support of the district during this unprecedented time.
- Ms. Rose agrees that the technology and support has been great. She has heard from other parents about their experiences with remote school and how they feel supported. She appreciated today's messaging regarding graduation, and she looks forward to

seeing how that goes. She is hoping there will be ways for the community to be involved and agrees that people are experiencing grief due to missing traditional events at the end of the school year.

- Mr. Benjamin appreciates the comments that have already been made. He shared that he has been focused on what school will look like in the fall and has done a lot of reading and watching on that topic. It will not be business as usual, and there are many unknown factors at this time. Although he knows members of the executive team are viewing the meeting, he misses seeing their faces at the in-person meetings and acknowledged that the work they have been and continue to do is appreciated.

#### **4.0 NEW BUSINESS**

##### **4.1 New Business:**

- Mr. Benjamin stated that he will be in contact with individual board members to gather input for Dr. Baker's superintendent evaluation.

#### **5.0 CLOSING ITEMS**

**5.1 Board Assessment of Meeting:** Ms. Diaz Hackler assessed the meeting, with an overall rating of 4 (*commendable*).

**5.2 Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

**Approved:**



Douglas Benjamin, Board President

**Attest:**



Greg Baker, Secretary to the Board

*Minutes approved: June 17, 2020*