



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING/PUBLIC HEARING
BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS
July 15, 2020**

1.0 OPENING ITEMS

1.1 Meeting Date and Location:

July 15, 2020 – via remote Zoom meeting.

1.2 Call to Order/Roll Call:

Mr. Benjamin called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. 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. Each board member has seen all messages received. Those messages have focused on the topics of police presence in our schools and what will occur this fall regarding the opening of the 2020-21 school year. He noted that Dr. Baker and his team are working tirelessly, and updates will be given on these topics this evening. Police presence in schools is not a new issue, and the district has worked to reduce the number of district resource officers to one while increasing mental health professionals. Mr. Benjamin recalls that it was not long ago that there were community requests to increase the police presence in reaction to increased school shootings across the country. In 2018 the board passed a resolution to declare support for student safety. He also noted that the school board operates under a policy governance model, which means the board sets out the outcomes that are expected and leaves the means to achieve those outcomes up to the superintendent. Last year the board passed a new policy on race and equity, [Executive Limitation 10](#). This policy was because of numerous discussions and work with staff; it led to the board receiving a statewide award for its work on race and equity. The board cares deeply about equity because the community cares about it, and he shared that valuable feedback and information have been received by the board over the last few weeks.

1.4 Public Hearing on Adoption of the 2020-21 Bellingham School District Budget

Mr. Benjamin explained the purpose of the public hearing, which is to provide an opportunity for anyone who would like to speak for or against the adoption of the 2020-21 budget to comment before the board takes action on the budget later this evening. No audience presented, and no public testimony was offered relating to the proposed budget adoption.

1.5 Superintendent’s Announcements and Report: Summary of Dr. Baker’s comments:

- Dr. Baker shared that this is the last week that the Lighthouse Mission will be occupying Bellingham High School. The school will receive a thorough cleaning and

some painting once the Lighthouse Mission has moved out. It has been a big endeavor for our district and community. He shared that he feels pride that the district, with support of the board, took a request from the mayor to help some of our community's most vulnerable residents. He thanked the staff at Bellingham High School and others in the district who worked hard in order for that to occur.

- The creation of the budget is a yearlong process, and the board will be asked to approve the draft 2020-21 budget in tonight's consent agenda. In a meeting with the state superintendent yesterday, districts were advised that, given what is known now, they should plan for the 2020-21 school year as if the legislature is continuing to provide funding for basic education. Our district is operating in that way, while being cautious about spending. The legislature may convene mid-year to reduce budgets and funding for things that are not defined as basic education, and we believe our fund balance puts us in a good position this year. Advice from the state superintendent is that the next biennium budget will likely be reduced. CARES Act funds have flowed through to the state and should be flowing through to districts, although the state may choose to use those funds at the state level. We are planning to use it for personal protective equipment (PPE) and for staff work over the summer in response to the pandemic. Dr. Baker responded to questions regarding the budget from board members.
- For the past six weeks, Dr. Baker and his team have worked to be good listeners on the topic of police presence in schools. It is clear there are many different perspectives. Some feel that to be an equity warrior, there should be no police in schools; however, it is more complex than that. He expects that people will react differently when a decision has been made on this topic. Some will say they appreciate they were listened to, that staff was thoughtful, and even though the decision wasn't what they wanted they know that the issues were genuinely explored. This is not a new topic. This district has engaged deeply in how to reduce suspensions, expulsions and arrests and acknowledges that historically some groups have been over-represented in discipline and punishment. Principals and school counselors have worked hard to restore harm and help students learn, and law enforcement has been a partner in that work. With the national context and a community who has advocated hard, we have been pushed to think more deeply about it. Dr. Baker and other staff have met with students, students of color, staff, parents, law enforcement and higher education professors who are in the field of researching the history of policing in this country. More information will be sent out soon. It's important to understand the history of policing, and we will continue to educate students, staff and parents on that history. Dr. Baker also spent a lot of time listening to national experts on law enforcement and race, including leaders in law enforcement and its effect on different ethnicities. It's a necessary institution that should always be evolving as we learn. Our district has made a conscious effort to increase counseling support, homeless coordinators, drug and alcohol counselors and other mental health professionals over the past several years. The term "defunding the police" refers to using current funds to increase other supports, not necessarily cutting all police services. As a state and country, we have a lot of work to do, but we are proud of the work that has been done here. With regard to the first responders meal program, that can be put on hiatus for now. The district does not require a lot of

security at events, but we will continue to look at that. Right now, the district does not think we will be eliminating our district resource officer. While all of us likely have a heightened anxiety when law enforcement is present, in talking with police, it may be that we can lessen that feeling while still having police support when needed. There may be a perception that the officer is there to arrest students, but much of the work of the officer is in support of our students, some who have been the victim of a crime. The district resource officer has been specifically trained and knows our protocols. The reality is that there are times when a police officer is needed, including when a student has been the victim of a crime. At other times, our students have committed a crime. Our protocol needs to include ways of decreasing the number of times we call the resource officer, and we will continue to refine that process. Dr. Baker will refine a message to the community that details where we are and hopes that the community will support us in continuing to learn and adjust. Board members commented on this topic, and Dr. Baker noted that, in the end, we all care about our students and want them to be safe.

- Dr. Baker shared photos of the baseball, softball and soccer/rugby fields at Squalicum High School, which are nearing completion.
- On the topic of the pandemic, Dr. Baker noted that he will be sending an update out to the community soon. Some districts across the nation and world are sharing out their plans for next year, while some have postponed reopening for two to three weeks. Our state superintendent has directed that districts plan to open in the fall, abiding by the Department of Health regulations, which includes six feet of distance between students and staff. We also are also mandated to make plans and be prepared in case closures are needed. Each week the context is changing. Two weeks ago, there was a report from the American Association of Pediatrics that stressed the importance of students returning to school, which led to an increase in the hope that we might be back in the school buildings. Last week we heard the President and Secretary of Education make comments about opening schools that caused educators across the country to feel some pressure about a lack of safety in the workplace/our schools. We are working with labor leaders on how to keep everyone safe. There are intensified discussions about whether schools should open across the country. Having met this week with area and state superintendents, many are feeling less hopeful that we will be opening our school facilities in the fall. Many districts are coming out to say they will not be offering a hybrid model and will be online only. We are continuing to plan what our options are. Dr. Baker understands that people want to know the answer, and at some point, we will put out information about current thinking. We are fortunate to not be starting until Sept. 2. The expectation is that students will be learning, either in school or remotely. Dr. Baker introduced Executive Director of Operations Jessica Sankey and Executive Director of Teaching and Learning Kristi Dominguez, who gave a high-level overview of the work that the Reopening Schools Advisory Committee is engaged in, as well as who is serving on that committee. There were comments and questions from board members.

2.0 CONSENT ITEMS:

Ms. Bashaw made a **motion** to approve the following consent agenda items:

- 2.1 Approval of Minutes of the June 17, 2020 Regular Meeting and June 24, 2020 Special Meeting**
- 2.2 Approval of Expenditures and Payroll – June 2020**
- 2.3 Resolution 8-20, Acceptance of Sehome Fields Project**
- 2.4 Resolution 12-20, Parkview Modernization of Existing Gym**
- 2.5 Resolution 13-20, Adoption of 2020-21 Budget**
- 2.6 Resolution 14-20, Amendment to Resolution 25-17**
- 2.7 Resolution 15-20, Request to Transfer Funds from the Capital Projects Fund to the General Fund**
- 2.8 Award of Bid for Parkview Elementary School Rebuild**
- 2.9 YMCA – Summer Programming at Options High School (#1920-167)**
- 2.10 AVID Center Products and Services Quote/Order for 2020-21 (#2021-012)**
- 2.11 Xiologix Renewals (#2021-017, #2021-018)**
- 2.12 Lithtex and Jostens Agreements for Services (#2021-019, #2021-020, #2021-021)**
- 2.13 Ednetics, Inc. Service Agreement (#2021-023)**
- 2.14 ESD 112 Interlocal Purchasing Agreement (#2021-027)**
- 2.15 Personnel Recommendations**
- 2.16 Personal Services Contracts**

Unanimous affirmative vote.

3.0 INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

3.1 School Board Directors’ Reports. Highlights of comments:

- Ms. Mason expressed appreciation for the community members who have contacted the board with their perspectives on reopening schools and police presence in the schools. We are lucky to live in a community that cares this much for our students and equity for students. She also thanked Dr. Baker and his team for moving so intentionally through the process police in schools. She appreciates the time that has been taken to listen, research and reach out for input from others.
- Ms. Diaz Hackler noted that it is important for everyone to contact legislators to advocate that more counselors and social workers be funded by the state. All elections are important, including school board elections, and she would like to see more school board members of color.
- Ms. Rose expressed gratitude to Dr. Baker for having difficult conversations and the executive team for the work they are doing to get students back to school safely. Kids have been through a lot, and the level of care that is being taken for students and staff is appreciated. The questions are challenging, but the engagement and involvement is encouraging.
- Mr. Benjamin shared that he has spent a considerable amount of time carefully reading the emails that have been received. We do hear you, and as board members it is very important that we hear from you. You guide our work in terms of oversight. He noted that Assistant Superintendent of Finance Simone Sangster and her team have put together a budget that is remarkable. Our district’s budget process won a state award a couple of years ago, and we appreciate the work that was done again this year with the budget process.

4.0 NEW BUSINESS

4.1 New Business (as needed): n/a.

5.0 CLOSING ITEMS

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

5.2 Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Approved:



Douglas Benjamin, Board President

Attest:



Greg Baker, Secretary to the Board

Minutes approved: August 19, 2020