



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
December 14, 2022**

**1.0 OPENING ITEMS**

**1.1 Meeting Date and Location:**

December 14, 2022 – Options High School, 2015 Franklin St., Bellingham, WA.

**1.2 Call to Order/Land Acknowledgment:**

Ms. Bashaw called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. She acknowledged that this meeting is being held on the ancestral homelands of the Coast Salish people.

**1.3 Roll Call:**

Present: Directors Kelly Bashaw (President), Douglas Benjamin, Camille Diaz Hackler, Jenn Mason, Katie Rose, Superintendent Greg Baker and Sheri O’Day (recorder).

**1.4 Annual Organizational Meeting, Election of Officers**

Board President: Mr. Benjamin made a **motion**, seconded by Ms. Mason, to nominate Ms. Diaz Hackler for this position for the coming year, and Ms. Diaz Hackler agreed to serve. Unanimous affirmative vote. Ms. Diaz Hackler thanked Ms. Bashaw for serving as president over the past year.

Board Vice President: Ms. Bashaw made a **motion** to nominate Mr. Benjamin for this position for the coming year, seconded by Ms. Mason, and Mr. Benjamin agreed to serve. Unanimous affirmative vote.

**1.5 Audience:**

- Cadence Phelps, a sophomore, believes adults should take care of students. She understands there are some legal reasons why the district has not responded. She recently talked with Mr. Atkins, principal of Bellingham High School, and wishes students were given more information, as it is confusing and tricky to navigate. She is asking the board why people who harm students continue to be employed.
- Ceres Lehman would like to point out this is a systemic issue and school employees are mandated reporters. This is a legal protection for students which needs to be upheld. There was a student walkout last year, this is not a new problem. There are many assaulters and victims at Squalicum High School because staff is not willing to make meaningful change. She does not know what red tape prevents the change. People are called slurs and those who do so are allowed to stay due to negligence of school staff. Hotlines will not help students, kicking rapists out of school will. She is afraid for new students who will be entering the schools and perpetrators should not be allowed to stay. She would not send her own kids to Squalicum.
- Moose McGinty is here to speak about the failure to report sexual abuse in the school and believes the students, even if the staff don’t. School staff did nothing about the reported assault, and they are still in the building. Dr. Baker does not care. She asked

- that students' feelings of discomfort be taken into consideration. Sexual assault is a big deal, and the lack of action speaks for the district. Students are re-living their trauma when they see these adults in the school. She encourages parents to have conversations with their students, even when the conversations are uncomfortable. Students should be heard, loved and seen by all.
- Avery Catlin shared that her mother is a teacher at Whatcom Middle School, and last year a student there was locked in a bathroom. The student was not able to safely be in a classroom with other students, so a bathroom was refurbished to be a learning space for him. The communication between students and the school board is troublesome. She believes the school board cares, but hoops and boundaries make it not easy to communicate. Trust and communication are two words she's heard a lot today. There is not a lot of trust because there is no communication between us. She wants to know what happened and only knows limited information. The best students can do is come and talk to the school board, and she asks that the boundaries be less divided.
  - Evan McDevitt is a student at Squalicum High School. He hopes the number of people attending shows the gravity of this issue. The norms put in place by adults make it impossible to fight for the change that is necessary. Students feel betrayed by the adults in our lives. School staff are concerned with image and he's tired of false promises that are met with empty words. School administrators tell us what is right and what is wrong. Why do administrators cheat us of voices to which they are entitled? Why do they feel they transcend the rules they have taught us? The approach the administration is taking needs to be changed, as trust has been lost due to staff actions. When you will be ready to change with us?
  - Mikkel Hong stated he doesn't want to be sharing this, but five years ago he reported a sexual assault of one of his children. He sent an email to the principal and teacher, and the principal said a safety plan was put in place. The assaulted student was then stabbed with a pencil by the same student. Hearing the recent events brings that all back and it's insane that nothing was done. If I received an email like that as a teacher, I would move the students to opposite sides of the classroom and monitor the situation. Not moving the offending student away from my child is idiotic and insane. Figure it out. Avoiding difficult conversations leads to this. When people are predatory against other people, it needs to be dealt with.
  - Eden Johnson is a freshman at Bellingham High School and has been attending the Bellingham Public Schools for five years. She is extremely disappointed. She tried to report something in seventh grade that was nowhere near as terrible as this and was scared the district would do nothing. There was no evidence, and it was not reported until six months later. She only received one email, and nothing was done. The district is hiding in fear and scared of retaliation. School is not safe anymore. There may be posters with tiplines, but that does not guarantee safety. With so much going on in two different schools, the district needs to do better. You are failing us and you are failing to work with us. We feel inferior to you because we are young. Hopefully we will not inherit any of this behavior. Fear is the emotion I feel most at school and sexual assaults have been on the rise at Bellingham High School this year.
  - Leah Clark is here as a student advocate, as Options High School administrators have abused their position of power. The Bellingham School District has made a promise

- to the public to use restorative practices, but this is not happening at Options. School staff members can substantially interfere with a student's education. Administrators follow students into the bathroom to watch them urinate. She asked the board to take time to understand the district staff's lack of following policies. Negative consequences should not be used until positive reinforcement has proven to be non-effective. Options High School is supposed to be an opportunity for a new beginning without judgment. She asks the board to take this information into consideration.
- Camden Morris is the parent of two grade school students who were formerly enrolled in the Bellingham Public Schools but are now being homeschooled. There is a sheer lack of district staff taking responsibility, starting at the top with Greg Baker. You have kids coming here tonight to tell you what your job is, and you should be embarrassed. Sexualization is being promoted to little kids. Every single one of you is of the same opinion, with everyone being about diversity. Listen to other people and other ideas. This is not a one-party system; we are a community and all viewpoints count. How can kids trust adults who don't do the right thing and how many times will it take being in the spotlight to change? Stop the sexualization of kids. It's a shame.
  - Mark Geri is a former student who has children at Sunnyland Elementary. He is impressed with the students who are here tonight. While a student at Sehome High School, he was called defamatory names and abused. Things in this district do not change or get addressed. He was consistently stuck in a room talking about his feelings with the same people who beat him up. His children in elementary school are being bullied and having those issues ignored by the administrators has been challenging. Certain things should be addressable at the school level, and it should be a safe place. It hasn't been in the past and it isn't now, which is a failure of leadership. He asked that the proposal to pay for legal fees of district staff should not be approved. They made choices that need to be seen by the students here tonight.

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

- Dr. Baker acknowledged our phenomenal students who are here this evening. As educators we are here to work hard, and what we have heard this week is that they want us to listen more and do better. They have things to say, they have pain, and they are not convinced that as adults we are hearing them. It is difficult for staff and the school board to hear their feedback tonight, but it has been powerful, and their honesty gives us direction about what we can do better. The administrative team will continue to lean in. A short recess was taken to allow those who did not wish to stay for the remainder of the meeting to leave.
- This past week has been challenging and staff have been engaged heavily in the work.
- Dr. Baker shared a few highlights from the EL-7 and EL-8 monitoring reports that are included in tonight's consent agenda.
- He then shared some photos of celebrations in classes for the World Cup; the gratitude lunch at Options High School from a couple of weeks ago; Native American History month; book fairs at elementary schools with local first responders as guest readers; a culinary class fundraiser to support cancer research; and a Futures Northwest event at Options High School.
- The [Sustainability Advisory Committee](#) has been meeting and is engaged in next steps.

- Some of our schools have had new reader boards installed.
- The [School-Based Health Center Planning Task Force](#) is underway. They have recently been looking at how it has been done in school districts in other communities.
- A Kwanzaa family event is scheduled for tomorrow evening at Bellingham High School.
- Dr. Ken Gass, who served on the school board for 17 years, was recently recognized by the Chamber of Commerce with a [Lifetime Achievement Award](#).

## 2.0 CONSENT ITEMS:

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

- 2.1 **Approval of Minutes of the Nov. 8, 2022 School Board Visit; Nov. 9, 2022 Regular Meeting; Nov. 18, 2022 Special Meetings (2); and Nov. 29, 2022 School Board Visit**
- 2.2 **Approval of Expenditures and Payroll – November 2022**
- 2.3 **Resolution 24-22, Declaring an Emergency and Waiving Bidding Requirements for Carl Cozier Safety/Security Improvements**
- 2.4 **Resolution 25-22, Transfer of Funds from Capital Projects Fund to General Fund**
- 2.5 **Resolution 26-22, Investment and Signatory Change**
- 2.6 **Resolution 27-22, Cancellation of Stale-Dated Checks**
- 2.7 **Resolution 28-22, Legal Defense for Employees**
- 2.8 **New District Office Change Order #01**
- 2.9 **Policy 1822 Update, Training and Professional Development for Board Members**
- 2.10 **EL-7 Monitoring Report – Budget Planning and Execution**
- 2.11 **EL-9 Monitoring Report – Asset Maintenance and Protection**
- 2.12 **Adoption of Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Sex Education Curriculum**
- 2.13 **OSPI iGrants 217 Highly Capable Program Assurances**
- 2.14 **DCYF Workforce Retention Grant**
- 2.15 **Avail Home Health, Inc. Contract (#2223-097)**
- 2.16 **U.S. OMNI & TSACG Compliance Services Amendment (#2223-100)**
- 2.17 **Sendan Center Addendum to Agreement for Services (#004-2223A)**
- 2.18 **Personnel Recommendations**
- 2.19 **Personal Services Contracts**

Unanimous affirmative vote.

## 3.0 POLICY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

### 3.1 Revision to B/SR-3.1.1, Monitoring Response Form

This item will be moved to the January 18, 2023 regular meeting.

## 4.0 BOARD RESPONSE TO MONITORING

### 4.1 Board Response to Monitoring – EL-1, Expectations of Superintendent

This item will be moved to the January 18, 2023 regular meeting.

### 4.2 Board Response to Monitoring – EL-10, Race and Equity

This item will be moved to the January 18, 2023 regular meeting.

**4.3 Board Response to Monitoring – EL-5, Communication and Counsel to the Board**  
This item will be moved to the January 18, 2023 regular meeting.

**5.0 INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

**5.1 School Board Directors’ Reports.** Highlights of comments:

- Ms. Mason heard the frustration this evening about what can and cannot be shared about recent events, and that is understandably frustrating for everyone. She acknowledged the students who spoke tonight, specifically acknowledging the bravery it takes to speak at a school board meeting and use their voice to talk about what they believe in. She was a sexual assault advocate for Whatcom County DVSAS (Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services) for 10 years and knows how events can bring up pain for those who have experienced violation and those who have been unsupported. She also appreciates the staff who are listening, leaning in and learning, using this moment to learn what we can do better.
- Mr. Benjamin agrees with Ms. Mason’s comments. The entire board attended the WSSDA conference in Spokane in November. He attended many meetings, but the best part was all the school board members spending time together. He was nominated for a WSSDA position but declined the nomination. The board’s visit to Columbia Elementary School was great, and the “bugs and wishes” presentation was a wonderful example of social emotional learning. He plans to keep investigating how to increase student voice on our board. Each WSSDA board member received two 100-year commemorative anniversary coins at the conference and were instructed to share one with someone else, and Mr. Benjamin presented a coin to Dr. Baker.
- Ms. Rose also thought the Columbia visit was fantastic. She was excited to see the intention of giving children at an early age the language to advocate for themselves. It was her first visit as a board member to one of our older schools. Temperature regulation, size and spaces are noticeably different from our newer schools. She thanked those who chose to attend tonight’s meeting. She agrees that it’s frustrating that details cannot be more transparent due to privacy laws. It’s important for every child to know they can continue asking for help until they get it and speaking up about it is brave.
- Ms. Bashaw also thanked those who attended and spoke this evening about a difficult time and topic. We hear you. She appreciates the staff who take time to lean in and listen to the students.
- Ms. Diaz Hackler also appreciates the participation of students at the meeting.

**5.2 GP-7.2 – 2022-23 Annual Board Agenda, Revised – general review.**

**6.0 NEW BUSINESS**

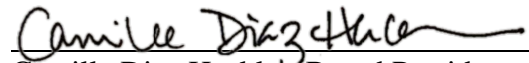
**6.1** n/a

**7.0 CLOSING ITEMS**


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

**7.2 Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

**Approved:**

  
Camille Diaz Hacklet, Board President

**Attest:**

  
Greg Baker, Secretary to the Board

*Minutes approved: January 18, 2023*