

Newberg School District 29J
Board of Directors Minutes September 24, 2024
Executive Session 6:00 p.m. followed by Regular Session via Zoom

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Sol Allen
Deb Bridges VIA ZOOM
Trevor DeHart
Jeremy Hayden
Aubrey Nichols
James Wolfer
Nancy Woodward

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

STAFF PRESENT

Dr. Paula A. Radich, Interim Superintendent

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT

Oliver Kolbet
Katelyn Nummelin

I. REGULAR SESSION CALL TO ORDER

A duly called and noticed Executive Session and Regular Session of the Board of Directors of Newberg School District 29J was called to order by Vice - Chair James Wolfer at 6:00 p.m. on September 10, 2024.

Board members and staff were present, the public attended in person and via Zoom. This video session was recorded and posted on the Newberg School District website via 09.10.24 – YouTube.

II. FLAG SALUTE

The flag salute was led by Director DeHart.

III. EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board recessed to the Superintendent's Office for Executive Session per:

- ORS 192.660 (2) (a): To consider the employment of a public officer, employee, staff member or individual agent.
- ORS 192.660 (2) (e): To conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to negotiate real property transactions.
- ORS 192.660 (2) (f): To consider records exempt by law from public inspection.
- ORS 192.660 (2) (h): To consult with legal counsel regarding the legal rights and duties of the public body with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed.

IV. REVIEW AGENDA

V. CONSENT AGENDA

Consent Agenda Items included:

- A. Board Meeting Minutes 09.10.2024
- B. Donations Friendsview, Austin Family Foundation and John Palmer Estate
- C. Declaration of Surplus Items: Chehalem Valley Middle School, Physical Plant, New Dundee Elementary School

Move that the Newberg School District Board of Directors approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Motion: Director Nichols

Second: Director Allen

MOTION PASSED: 7 Yes 0 No

VI. PUBLIC FORUM

There was no public comment.

VII. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE COMMENTS

Student representatives Kolbet and Nummelin deferred comments until agenda item X.

VIII. REPORTS, PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Enrollment Study (Lesley Carsley)

Shortly following her appointment as Interim Superintendent of the Newberg School District in June 2024, Superintendent Radich advised the Board of Directors to initiate an Enrollment Study.

A number of factors influence fluctuations in enrollment. While the district has often cited lower birth rate and parental choice following the pandemic as significant impacts on the district's enrollment, there is more to the story.

Enrollment in the Newberg School District declined by **-21.5%** over the past eleven years when compared to neighboring districts: McMinnville (-1.4%), Sherwood (-3.6%) and Forest Grove (-.2%) during that same time period.

Why is Newberg's enrollment decline so much greater than its neighboring districts? To know the true story and build back the school district, the Board was encouraged to commission an enrollment study to determine the reasons families opted out of enrollment in the Newberg School District.

While the numbers tell a story, parents and students provide the true reasons for opting out of the Newberg School District.

Two paths were considered for an enrollment study:

- (1) Data collection and analysis; and,
- (2) Personal contact and interaction with families who no longer enroll their children in the district.

Lesley Carsley, retired Newberg School District administrator and volunteer, personally contacted 200+ families who left the district during the 2023-2024 school year and recorded their responses to the following questions:

What grade level(s) were your children in 2023-2024?

Where should they have attended school?

Where did they attend in 2023-2024?

Why did you choose to enroll your child/children in a different school or academic environment?

What would it take for you to re-enroll your child/children in their neighborhood school?

Total Number of Families Leaving the District in 2023-2024: 207 (Equates to 313 students)

Total Number of Families Successfully Contacted 122 (Equates to 167 students).

Of those contacted 21 Families (30 Students) Moved.

Reasons Behind the Decision in Order of Frequency:

Bullying and School Safety

Mental Health and Special Needs

Academic Concerns

Political Climate and Cultural Tensions

Administrative Instability and Leadership Concerns

Comparison with other Districts

Alternative Education Classes

Dissatisfaction with Program Offerings

What Would It Take for Your Child to Return to the Newberg School District?

For parents to consider returning their children to their neighborhood schools several key changes would need to be implemented across multiple areas, including academic rigor, safety, discipline, stable and strong leadership and some aspects of school climate.

As the Board heard the report questions regarding "bullying" emerged. While some believe that this is a secondary school issue, results of the study indicate otherwise: 9 families cited bullying at elementary schools, 7 families cited middle school and 7 families cited high school.

B. Communications Update and Recommendations (Claudia Stewart)

As of June of 2024, Claudia Stewart, retired Newberg School District Communications Director and volunteer, assisted the district by updating communications systems, posting Board meeting packets, organizing and facilitating Budget Listening Sessions, surveying staff and parents regarding communications priorities and updating district emergency protocols etc.

Mrs. Stewart provided the Board of Directors with a summary of communications projects completed to date, survey results and priority communications recommendations:

How did we get here? In the last seven years Newberg has had: Five Superintendents and five Communications Directors.

Method to Determine Communication Effectiveness

Conduct research to get a clear picture of current district communication effectiveness with key audiences. Survey of parents and staff, Interviews with internal stakeholders, website and social media reviews, digital and print material reviews

In August 2024, 270 staff and 571 parents responded to the District's Communications Survey.

What did we learn?

- Parents saw district as "Mess. Chaotic." Staff saw a "Hot Mess"
- Majority of staff said they lack knowledge about district finances, leadership decisions, district goals and plans.
- Opportunities to provide feedback are limited.
- Most staff do not understand why or how leadership decisions are made.
- Only 57% school staff trust district office communication, citing a lack of transparency and mistrust of leadership actions.
- Satisfaction with internal communication is low and differs widely among employee groups.

All said, communication is more important than ever.

What did we do?

- Provided opportunities for input through surveys, listening sessions, online feedback channels and conversations.
- Streamlined communication and distributed information equitably to all staff, including weekly Superintendent Update and Board Briefs.
- Implemented ongoing, two-way communication strategies to address and resolve critical budget issues.
- Engaged community support for school supplies and as volunteers.
- Began website improvements.
- Re-established uniform emergency response protocols for principals.

Recommendations

- Continue to build trust through honest, transparent communication.
- Maintain streamlined, timely communication that treats all staff equitably.
- Listen and provide opportunities for input.
- Create a comprehensive communication plan based on findings and recommendations.
- Measure staff and parent satisfaction with communication annually.
- Move forward together to re-envision the Newberg School District. "Chaos" and "Hot Mess" are giving way to positive changes.

Rebuilding trust in the school district requires supporting a culture of equitable communication that is transparent, honest and effective. This does not fall to a single staff position but to everyone on the front lines in Newberg schools

C. Bond Projected Fund Balance and Proposed Projects (Dr. Paula A. Radich)

On November 3, 2020, Newberg and Dundee voters passed a **\$141 million** Construction Bond for Newberg School District 29J to fund health, safety, and security improvements, provide upgrades and updates to buildings and improve/expand learning spaces.

In 2019, after the completion of a 950-page independent school facility evaluation, the district formed a citizen-led bond committee that gathered public input regarding the needs of school buildings. The Bond Committee then made a recommendation to the

Board of Directors. The Bond Citizens Committee proposed a bond measure to fund the following capital projects:

Improve health, safety and security at every school:

- o Install and upgrade emergency communications, security camera systems
- o Air quality improvements
- o Fire safety systems

Upgrade and Update Aging Schools, Facilities:

- o Electrical, roofing, plumbing
- o Technology Infrastructure Upgrades
- o Covered play structures
- o Health clinic improvements at NHS

Expand Hands on Learning Opportunities:

- o CTE/STEAM improvements
- o Science Lab Upgrades at NHS
- o Catalyst Expansion
- o Special Education Enhancements

Expand and Modernize Edwards Elementary with new cafeteria, music classrooms, and eliminate portable classrooms and build a new 350-Student elementary school replacement in Dundee.

As of September 24, 2024, nearly all bond projects are complete. It is estimated that \$3,745,043 in bond funds remain. Recommended projects to date include roofing, HVAC replacement, exterior sealing and painting and flooring. Staff and administrators will submit additional requests to the Superintendent by Friday, September 27, 2024. The Superintendent recommends the Board's Facility Committee and/or the Bond Citizens Committee meet to develop project criteria and recommend a prioritized list of projects to the Board of Directors.

D. Personnel Committee Update (Chair Deb Bridges)

The Board's Personnel Committee is comprised of Chair Deb Bridges, Vice-Chair, Director Wolfer and former Board Chair Nancy Woodward. The deadline for Interim Superintendent applications was Friday, September 20th. To date, the Board received nine (9) applications and will interview three candidates September 30, 2024. Interviews will be conducted in Executive Session.

IX. BOARD ACTION ITEMS

A. Finance Advisory Committee Recommendation (Director Hayden)

On July 9, 2024 the Board of Directors of Newberg School District 29J approved the formation of a Finance Advisory Committee.

The current Finance Advisory Committee (consisting of two (2) Board of Directors and two (2) Budget Committee members) requests a change in the originally approved Finance Advisory Committee Roles and Responsibilities to allow greater flexibility in the number of community members that can serve on the committee by changing the wording from "three" to "up to six" community members.

Move that the Newberg School District Board of Directors adopt proposed changes to the Finance Advisory Committee Roles and Responsibilities as presented.

Motion: Director Woodard

Second: Director Nichols

MOTION PASSED: 7 YES 0 NO

B. Approve Signers: Tiger Manufacturing (Dr. Paula A. Radich, Interim Superintendent)

Tiger Manufacturing is a student-run machine shop, fully functioning at Newberg High School. Students machine real parts for real customers for real paychecks.

Tiger Manufacturing provides a unique, hands-on educational experience that prepares students for life after high school. The business is student-driven from the ground up. Students receive customer orders, procure tools and material, manufacture parts, send invoices, and report payroll, among other tasks. Hours worked are recorded for class credit and payment at minimum wage. In its first year of operation, students manufactured over 10,000 parts and successfully turned a profit.

Move that the Newberg School District Board of Directors remove Madison Lenz as check signer for *Tiger Manufacturing* and add Dominic Tomaselli (CEO) and Cade Waters (CFO) as signers for *Tiger Manufacturing*.

Motion: Director Hayden

Second: Director DeHart

MOTION PASSED: 7 YES 0 NO

C. Potential Employee Action (Vice-Chair, Director James Wolfer)

Move that the Newberg School District Board of Directors place Dr. Stephen Phillips on paid administrative leave pending the results of an independent investigation currently being conducted.

Motion: Vice-Chair Director Wolfer

Second: Director Woodward

MOTION PASSED: 6 YES 0 NO 1 ABSTAIN (DeHart)

D. Conciliation Agreement (Vice-Chair, Director James Wolfer)

On June 28, 2022, Complainant filed a complaint with Newberg School Board alleging multiple violations of law. With respect to OAR 581-022-2370, Complainant made the following allegations:

The school board repeatedly failed to process complaints in accordance with the district's complaint process.

The chair of the school board (Board Member 1) and another board member (Board Member 6) regularly heard anonymous complaints that were not submitted in accordance with the district's complaint process.

On November 8, 2021, the school board heard anonymous complaints against the district superintendent that were not submitted in accordance with the district's complaint process and that were not investigated properly.

With respect to Complainant's allegation that the school board violated ORS 659.850 and OAR 581-021-0045 by failing to accommodate Board Member 5's disability, Complainant made the following allegations

The school board did not provide Board Member 5 with material before the August 10, 2021, school board meeting, thereby failing to accommodate Board Member 5's disability.

On August 24, 2021, before an executive meeting of the school board, Board Member 6 opened a public meeting for the purpose of voting on whether to secure legal counsel without adhering to public meetings law, effectively failing to accommodate Board Member 5's disability.

The school board did not provide Board Member 5 with material before the November 9, 2021, school board meeting, thereby failing to accommodate Board Member 5's disability.

On April 8, 2022, before the April 12, 2022, school board meeting, Board Member 1 added an agenda item to the meeting without providing Board Member 5 with material related to that agenda item, thereby failing to accommodate Board Member 5's disability.

With respect to Complainant's allegation that the school board violated ORS 659.850 by inducing the harassment of minority race and LGBTQ2SIA+ individuals and failing to prevent or mitigate that harassment, Complainant made the following allegation:

At the July 13, 2021, school board meeting, a school board member (Board Member 7) proposed three changes to the meeting's agenda, including proposing a ban on Black Lives Matter and Pride flags, proposing to rescind the district's All Students Belong policy, and proposing to rescind the Anti-Racist Resolution that the board adopted on June 20, 2020.

The school board did not respond to Complainant's June 28th complaint.

On September 1, 2022, the Oregon Department of Education sent notice to Complainant and the school board that it was accepting Complainant's appeal under OAR 581-002-0005(1)(a)(B).

Under that rule, a complainant may file an appeal with the department if 30 days has transpired since the complainant filed a complaint with a school district at any step in a multistep complaint process, and the complainant has not received a written answer from the district.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

In consideration of the evidence before the Oregon Department of Education, the department found that the Newberg School Board may have violated ORS 659.850 and OAR 581-021-0045 because the board treated Board Member 5 in a manner that is "fair in form, but discriminatory in operation" on the basis of disability, and because the board limited Board Member 5's "enjoyment of any right, privilege, advantage, or opportunity" in consideration of that disability.

Accordingly, the department encourages the parties to reach an agreement through conciliation.

Because Complainant filed the appeal on behalf of Board Member 5, the parties for conciliation in this case are the school board and Board Member 5. However, Board Member 5 may involve Complainant, including allowing Complainant to negotiate on their behalf, in any way that Board Member 5 wants to.

ODE provided a deadline of 30 days for parties to enter into a conciliation order, which may be extended by mutual agreement. To develop the conciliation agreement, it will take a bit of drafting time and exchange of information, so it would be ideal to receive board authorization to negotiate a conciliation agreement, subject to board final approval.

At its meeting of September 10, 2024, the Newberg School District Board of Directors authorized legal counsel to negotiate a conciliation agreement with Rebecca Piros subject to final Board approval. Legal Counsel contacted Ms. Piros and drafted a recommended agreement pending Board approval.

Move that the Newberg School District Board of Directors approve the Conciliation Agreement between Rebecca Piros ("Ms. Piros) and Newberg School District No. 29J on this 24th day of September 2024 as presented. Ms. Piros and the District by and through its Board (the parties) agree and intend that this Conciliation Agreement will resolve the matters at issue in the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) Case Reference 2022-MM-17.

Motion: Director Vice-Chair Wolfer

Second: Director Woodward

MOTION PASSED: 7 YES 0

E. Rescind Resolution 2025-04: Resolution Authorizing Director James Wolfer to Serve as Real Estate Signee for Newberg School District 29J (Vice-Chair, Director James Wolfer)

At their meeting of December 12, 2023, the Newberg – Dundee School District Board of Directors unanimously declared Dundee Elementary School, 140 SW 5th Street, Dundee Oregon 97115 as surplus property as the property is no longer needed for the district's educational mission.

At that same meeting the Board of Directors authorized the Superintendent to take all necessary steps toward the Board's goal of selling Dundee Elementary School, including the authority to sub-delegate those responsibilities. Any purchase and sale agreement negotiated by the superintendent or designee shall be submitted to the Board for final approval.

Per property attorney Christopher Walters, the email contact included in the Sales Agreement for Dundee Elementary School should be one that holds for at least four (4) months after signature.

Given the temporary nature of Dr. Radich's employment and, given the Board of Directors had not yet appointed a new Interim Superintendent, the Board of Directors adopted Resolution 2005-04 appointing Director James Wolfer as District Real Estate signee for Newberg School District 29J. Resolution 2025-04 is attached.

As the Board is currently in the process of hiring a long-term interim superintendent, the Board desires to rescind Resolution 2025-04.

Move that the Newberg School District 29J Board of Directors rescind Resolution 2025-04: A Resolution Authorizing Director James Wolfer to Serve as Real Estate Signee for Newberg School District 29J by title only.

Motion: Director Woodward
Second: Director Hayden

MOTION PASSED: 7 YES 0 NO

X. BOARD AND SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

Director Nichols

Expressed gratitude for those participating in preparations for the beginning of the school year and for those who stepped up to volunteer. Appreciate the "Back to School" nights and attended the Edwards Elementary session.

Director Woodward

Thanked the community for supporting our schools, especially community groups that donated supplies. Looking forward to hiring of interim superintendent and stable leadership.

Chair Bridges

Reports that Providence Newberg Medical Center desires to partner with the Culinary Arts Program at Newberg High School to provide a community teaching kitchen. Bridges reported that several commissions are seeking student representatives and encouraged students to apply.

Director Wolfer

Thank you to the Board of Directors and to those making presentations this evening.

Director Hayden

Appreciated Communications and Enrollment Study reports and the time and effort it took to prepare the reports. Communications regarding the recent district safety concern were excellent.

Director Allen

Thanks to presenters – not an easy task given the short amount of time. Appreciate Joan Austin Elementary staff members for their dedication.

Director DeHart

Thanks to Lesley Carsley and Claudia Stewart for their presentations. Happy to have students back in school.

Student Representative Kolbet

Looking forward to Newberg High School Shakespeare class visiting Ashland and seeing four plays.

Student Representative Nummelin

Congratulations to FFA student bake sale. Students raised sufficient funds to support FFA participation in soils contest.

Superintendent Radich

Thanked volunteers Claudia Stewart, Lesley Carsley and Diane Ragsdale for their service. Thanked building and district administrators who have taken on district responsibilities despite having their own full time building responsibilities.

XI. PRELIMINARY BOARD MEETING AGENDA ITEMS

The Board of Directors Draft Preliminary Agendas for 2024-2025 is a suggested, but not finalized or approved list of items for Board consideration at future meetings. The Board may discuss and update the Preliminary Agenda Items list at the Regular Meetings of the Board of Directors.

- Bullying Update Re: Enrollment Study Results
- Emergency Procedures – School Resource Officers
- Culinary Partnership
- Future Bond Projects
- Dundee Elementary School Sale and Potential Loan Adjustments
- Calendar and Template for School Presentations

XII. FUTURE BOARD MEETING

Regular Session: October 08, 2024

ADJOURN MEETING:

Meeting adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

Recorded by: Dr. Paula A. Radich, Interim Superintendent

Approved by the Board of Directors: October 08, 2024

Vice-Chair: James Wolfer

