

**Skamania School District #2**

**Board WorkShop**

**January 10, 2024**

**6:00pm-8:00pm**

**Superintendent's Office**

Angus Anderson, Lisa Young, Milt Dennison, Donald Collins, Cynthia Dominik Medlin,  
Martin (Rowdy) LaFevers  
Staff: Katie Chavarria

**Call to Order**

Lisa Young called the meeting to order at 6:00pm

**Flag Salute**

**Changes or Additions to the Agenda**

There were no changes or additions to the agenda

**Review of Certificated and Classified Salary Comparisons**

The language for median has been corrected. This resulted from the incorrect use of the term "mean."

Mr. Dennison disclosed that, merely for discussion, he conducted a 6% salary increase. The cost of certain additional expenses, such as retirement, will be slightly increased. The cost of health insurance stays the same.

Next, Mr. Dennison gave the board an explanation of the additional materials that had been provided.

Mr. Dennison went over the numbers that were provided if retroactive checks would be provided and the cost to the district would be around \$58,000. Mr. Hole, the district's Financial Manager shared that the district could cover this cost fairly easily. However, to take caution as these costs will continue and the district does not want to be in a poor financial position.

Mrs. Young said she didn't see why we were talking about overall staff pay right now. School bus drivers' wages were increased months ago. Subsequently, the issue was raised that historically, the bus drivers were paid less than the office staff, and the bus driver increase altered that situation. The question was asked about the "historical" justification for the pay difference. That question has not been answered. According to Mrs. Young, the Board approved pay increase was needed to attract drivers, to acknowledge their responsibilities, and provide the training required for their jobs.

Mr. Dennison explained the justification for the pay increase for bus drivers, citing efforts to attract and retain drivers. Mr. Dennison doesn't know why office staff compensation has historically been higher. He also disclosed that the office manager and administrative assistant have the same pay scale. One thing to keep in mind is that some districts will reclassify positions and change each designated job to make it competitive with nearby districts. Since each district has a different perspective on each of these roles, it is difficult to draw comparisons between them.

Mrs. Young shared that Skamania School District does not have typical job descriptions for all of its positions. Is there a process that we are creating to follow in the future? Mrs. Young shared that the board had discussed pay for the school year (23-24) and checked in to see that people were pleased with the pay. Is there a need to do this now?

Chairman Collins stated that the raises that came out of the other neighboring school districts were significant enough that we need to be proactive and think ahead. We must either preserve our current teacher retention rate or face the prospect of losing some of them in the upcoming school year, or consider the teachers unionizing. We can look at retention if we take care of this right away and prevent these problems. Our expenses will exceed the raise we would have to provide teachers even if we lose them. The board, according to Chairman Collins, is content with the music instructor. Mentioning that she's a prime illustration of how her prior district had to reduce its staff of qualified instructors in order to balance its budget. Districts with higher salaries will be able to pay for more experienced teachers.

According to Mr. Anderson, this salary analysis procedure should be examined as part of the budget for the upcoming 24–25 school year. Responding in this way at this point in time gives the impression that we don't know what we are doing.

Given that this is an unusual process, Mr. LaFevers noted that the board is presented with an unexpected challenge. Mr. LaFevers questioned whether we would actually lose teachers as a result of this. Could our teachers potentially be taken by another district? No employment opportunities in other districts will become available for us to lose them to. The purpose of this gathering is to determine how to respond to an unusual circumstance.

Mrs. Young shared that Washougal School District is on a hiring freeze and is working to cut \$3 million dollars from the district's budget.

Chairman Collins stated losing ANY teachers would be difficult.

It was mentioned by Mr. Dennison that some of the instructors who work here could opt to work closer to home because they live further away.

"Historically" has no influence on what people should be paid, according to Mrs. Dominik-Medlin. Not saying that any of the employees are not worth the money. After a long time going over the documentation; the staff members decided to sign the contracts since they were satisfied. Really struggling with the board looking at this again. Mrs. Dominik-Medlin is against the process, not the value. Sharing it would not be the smart thing to do at this time and change things. (Mr. Anderson concurred)

Mr. Anderson asked are we establishing a precedent that we have to follow every year?

Mrs. Young then asked, "When do we start looking at the process?" Mr. Anderson responded, "Usually in March. When the state session finishes, we will know more about state allocation.

Regarding the procedure, Mr. Dennison stated that he is in agreement. In addition to being concerned about retention and recruitment, the district saw a greater

ending fund balance before arriving at this point. It was disclosed by Mr. Dennison that he worries that Skamania is at the bottom of the "totem pole."

Chairman Collins stated that Skamania is competing with every other district to fill these positions. We could be having these conversations later and wish we were more proactive in this discussion.

Mr. Anderson then shared that Skamania has historically been a low man on the "totem pole".

Mr. Dennison then shared that it looks as though the state will be allocating a 3.8% increase this year.

According to Mrs. Young, there are certain districts where there are smaller steps and higher starting compensation, and others where the opposite is true.

It may be argued, according to Mrs. Dominik-Medlin, that all teachers remain after work.

Not all teachers are able to stay after hours, according to Mrs. Young.

Mrs. Young talked about her concerns about the budget, which included curriculum expenses and HVAC repairs. The grant money we used to resolve the HVAC problems is now spent.

Mr. Dennison brought up the point that, in comparison to three years ago, there have been relatively few attorney fee expenses, perhaps saving close to \$20,000.

Chairman Collins mentioned that we must choose whether to go forward with the matter or put it to rest.

According to Mr. LaFevers, the board has identified certain distinctive qualities of our teaching personnel. I am not scared to think a little outside of the procedure as a result of this. Although I believe that our board is willing to bend the process in order to ensure the success of the school, I also respect the concept of procedure.

Mr. Anderson suggested against any increase, retroactive or midyear. According to him, the board ought to begin budgeting for salaries far in advance of the following year. For all reasons stated during the workshop staff members signed contracts based on knowing the salary for the year.

Mrs. Dominik-Medlin concurred that, for the same reasons that Mr. Anderson has mentioned, no changes should be made at this time.

According to Mr. LaFevers, contracts with teachers are valid and effective. I advise against making any changes. If teachers were shown how much it matters to keep them on staff, I would be happy to see it. We don't want this to lose us teachers.

Mrs. Young agreed with what the previous 3 Board members said and does not support a change in compensation at this time. She looks forward to addressing this issue as early as possible during the budgeting process for the 2024-25 school year.

Chairman Collins stated that the board should be more dynamic and that they might regret this discussion later.

Matter of the principal of the contract, as stated by Mr. LaFevers  
Chairman Collins expressed concern again for how things will look as we move forward. The raises did not meet inflation, and the math doesn't add up.

Mr. Dennison is going to see what is used in nearby districts for budget discussions.

Do you really want to tie someone to a contract if they don't want to be here?  
Chairman Collins addressed this concern.

According to Mr. Anderson, employees are aware that their pay is not as high as it would be in another area, yet they nevertheless work here for other reasons.

Final decision from board members: no alteration to salaries or contracts. This information will be reviewed early next year.

**Superintendent Comments**

Mr. Dennison shared with board members that Skamania School District will need a bus driver and to start looking at the school calendar for next year.

**Board Member Comments**

Chairman Collins stated that he will be out of town for the February board meeting.

Mr. LaFevers will be out of town until February 22nd.

Board members shared that they would like to start discussing staffing for the next school year.

There was a brief discussion about Matthew Williams and the fitness class he would like to potentially offer, which could include basketball.

**Adjournment**

Angus Anderson moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:03pm. Rowdy LaFevers seconded the motion.

The meeting adjourned at: 7:03pm

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Board Chair, \_\_\_\_\_

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Board Secretary, \_\_\_\_\_