

**Skamania School District #2
Regular Scheduled Board Meeting**

Minutes

February 26, 2024

6:30pm-8:30pm

Mrs. London's Room

[Zoom Link](#)

Meeting ID

285 593 9657

Passcode: 8t3C2U

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

Staff: Katie Chavarria, Amber Warren and Heather Whitman

Visitors:

Jessica Shumway, Michelle Miller, Raymond Chavarria, Kim Cunningham,
Audriane(Franki) Shipman-Kardinal, Via zoom Boyd Becker-Nunley

Call to Order

Lisa Young called the meeting to order at 6:30pm

Flag Salute

Changes to the agenda

There were no changes to the agenda

Public Comment

The board acknowledged the letter from Mr. Boyd Becker-Nunley. Mr. Anderson stated that he appreciated the letter and it was well written.

Jessica Shumway stated that she reviewed the minutes from the previous meetings regarding a raise, and it gives a feeling of being brushed off. When first coming to Skamania, the previous superintendent, Ralph Pruitt, led her to believe that selling the lumber from the forest would cause there to be additional funds. Mrs. Shumway shared that she had a close connection to the property due to her own work with the outdoor education program. Though Mrs. Shumway loves working with her students, it doesn't change the fact that she struggles to make ends meet. Currently, due to the housing market, Mrs. Shumway and her husband live in a 30-foot trailer. Mrs. Shumway shared that she loves her job, and it's obvious because we are passionate about our students; however, we deserve more money.

Michelle Miller After reading the meeting minutes from the board workshop on January 10th I was deeply disappointed and in quite a state of shock. There are numerous points of contention that I would like to address here tonight. As a teacher, and parent, deeply invested in the success and well-being of these students, I come before you today with a plea on behalf of myself and my fellow Skamania staff members. Every day, we pour our hearts and souls into the noble task of shaping the minds of the next generation. We work long hours, often at home and beyond contract hours - sacrificing personal time and resources to ensure that our students receive the best possible education. Yet, despite our unwavering dedication, many of us find ourselves struggling to make ends meet. Inflation is rampant and the cost of living continues to rise, while our salaries remain well below adjacent school districts. Do you want people to leave? Do you want to be a “trainer school” where we pay teachers at the bottom of the pay scale and continuously suffer from high turnover as they leave for higher paying jobs? Not to mention, our paras and bus drivers could quit today and go to Stevenson for an instant \$2/hr raise. On January 10th Lisa said “she didn’t see why we were talking about overall staff pay right now.” Let me remind the board that you have been discussing appropriate salary increases since May 31st 2023 when Donald asked “if there could be an adjustment to the proposed percentage of the raise to help ease the cost of inflation?” Angus stated that “at the end of the current fiscal year Skamania may have a better idea of what raises could be funded for the 23-24 school year.” Donald then moved to approve the 2023-2024 salary schedule with a 3.7 % raise as presented and to review at the end of the fiscal year. (which was August 31st, 2023) Cynthia said on January 10th “after a long time going over the documentation; the staff members decided to sign the 23-24 contracts since they were satisfied.” Let me remind you again, that the contracts were offered AFTER the May 31st meeting where you said salary adjustments would be reviewed after the fiscal year when the budget became more clear. Have any of you ever asked a teacher if their contract is negotiable? It is not. You are presented with a salary schedule and they say: your education and experience put you in this box so this is your offer. End of story. Meanwhile, the admin has been dangling the carrot in front of our noses every month that salary increases are likely and will be coming soon. The board has since been postponing this issue every month, asking Milt to spend large quantities of time on salary research for both classified and certificated staff. It's disheartening and very disappointing to see that the board could easily adjust the staff salaries to correct the shortcomings of the 2023-2024 contract offers, yet instead you chose to keep the money and completely destroy staff morale. Donald stated on January 10th “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.” Thank you Donald for being the voice of reason and advocating for the Skamania School Staff. It means more to us than empty promises and thank you.

Raymond Chavarria differed his time to Michelle Miller.

Michelle Miller read a statement from Lori Caccavo which stated “Thank you for taking time to hear from my colleagues and myself. After reading the minutes from the last board meeting I need to provide additional information. The minutes read that I knew what my salary was when I signed my contract. Yes, I certainly did. However, what I didn't know was how disproportionate the amount of work was to the low salary. After working in three states and nine school districts, over the span of 25 years, I was surprised at the large amount of personal hours and personal income I had to spend in order to do this job. All teachers spend their own money and personal time on their classrooms. But in my experience what Skamania asks is above and beyond that norm. I hope you will consider my comments in the spirit they were intended, not as a complaint but as additional information. I would also be remiss if I did not mention that maintaining your current staff would be beneficial to the Skamania kids. This is a wonderful group of dedicated, hardworking people who deserve your support and respect”.

Kim Cunningham shared that she started at Skamania School in the fall of the 23–24 school year. Mrs. Cunningham has been in the teaching and training industry for years. Between being a trainer for the fire academy as a subject matter firefighter, a level 7 CPR instructor who can certify doctors and other healthcare providers, and being a teacher for the Camas School District, Mrs. Cunningham has years of experience that she has brought to the Skamania School District. However, when I came on as a teacher at Skamania, there was quite a decrease in salary. When Mrs. Cunningham read the minutes from the January 10th board workshop, it showed her that we (staff) are not valued or appreciated. Mrs. Cunningham stated that she has had to consider selling her car to be able to continue to stay at Skamania due to financial reasons. She then thanked Chairman Collins for his words during the January 10th meeting and shared that a salary analysis should be considered as part of the budget. Mrs. Cunningham shared that she and her fellow colleagues love the students at the Skamania School. When we (teachers or staff) are not appreciated, it becomes a vicious cycle when you don't invest in teachers; they don't want to stay. It was stated at the January 10th meeting from Mr. LaFevers “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.” However, there are positions readily available in nearby districts. Making the statement from the January 10th meeting about not being able to find another position shows that we are not valued.

Audriane (Franki) Shipman-Kardinal shared that she loves working at Skamania School; she lives close by and has a family that supports her while she continues her education. Due to her current salary, half of her pay goes to PUD, a third to dental, and if there is an additional hardship, such as a vet emergency, it makes finances harder. Ms. Shipman-Kardinal stated that she knows that others' living situations are harder than her own and that the current salaries that staff receive are not enough to make ends meet. Ms. Shipman-Kardinal shared that we (staff) don't do this job for the money; we do it for the kids.

Consent Agenda

- Approval of January 22nd Regular Board Meeting Minutes
- Approval of bills and payroll

General Fund: Accounts payable check numbers 29999 through 30032 totaling \$157,217.11

Payroll and benefits (Payroll A/P) totaling \$108,944.15

Check 29998 for 753.90 for plowing the parking lot.

Angus Anderson moved to accept the consent agenda. Rowdy LaFevers seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business

- Transportation Updates

Mr. Dennison mentioned that Mr. Winters and Mrs. Nolan are developing a combined route that will make use of the bus that was purchased from White Salmon School District with a higher capacity. Mrs. Nolan and Mr. Winters will be working together to determine the combined single route's times and route. The combined route won't begin until after Spring Break. The Skamania School is still seeking an additional bus driver.

- HVAC System

Johnson Barrow is expected to visit the HVAC system on March 11th, after which they will prepare a proposal. Whether it is a problem with the equipment has not yet been established. The ESD 112 representative thinks that the heater and air conditioner are interfering with one another, causing a malfunction. The same HVAC system that Skamania is experiencing issues with is also being experienced by another district. Although they are not sure if they would attend, NW Controls has also been invited to the meeting on the eleventh. According to Mr. Dennison, the classrooms have been reasonably adequate. The multipurpose area, kitchen, and gym have all been cold though.

New Business

- 2024-2025 School Calendar Review and Adoption

Cynthia Dominik Medlin moved to approve the amended 2024-2025 school calendar as presented. Angus Anderson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- Budget Development Timelines

Mr. Dennison provided an update on the current measures being considered by the legislature, one of which would make changes to ParaEducator and support staff. It appears that the state will raise salaries for positions financed by the state by 3.7% going forward. Levy monies or the

internal budget must be used to cover positions that are not supported by the state. Chairman Collins had recommended that the budget planning process start quickly. The board talked about scheduling a meeting for a workshop on the budget. The board members then decided to have a budget workshop meeting on March 14 at 6 p.m.

- Healthy Schools Grant
 - Review and Acceptance

A grant was awarded to Skamania school for the nutritional program. The grant will help support the cost of an electric cooktop and food processor.

Cynthia Dominik Medlin moved to accept the \$6,328.00 Healthy Schools grant. Angus Anderson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Dennison confirmed that the cooktop had an 80 amp circuit breaker in response to Chairman Collins' question.

- 2023-2024 Highly Capable Plan Approval

Regarding the Highly Capable program for the 23–24 academic year, Mrs. Chavarria made a statement. The prior school year's Highly Capable program is nearly identical to this year. Now, though, we have to decide on a grade level at which to use universal screening practices for every student. There must be two rounds of universal screening: one before the second grade and one before the sixth. Second and fifth grade students are screened, and any other student may be referred by a parent or teacher. The screening program is called CogAT which offers an automatic entry into the highly capable program when a student scores a 90 or above. The highly capable program will also take submissions of student work for those that don't gain the automatic entry on the CogAT screener.

Concerns about when and how students leave the Highly Capable program after being admitted were brought up by the board.

Mrs. Chavarria shared that students remain in the Highly Capable program until a parent requests an exit form.

Donald Collins moved to approve the 23-24 Highly Capable Program as presented by Mrs. Chavarria. Rowdy Lafavers seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Reports

- Superintendent's Report- Milt Dennison

According to Mr. Dennison, applications are still being accepted for the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). A list of individuals who may be interested has been compiled based on their affiliation with Skamania School. There has been news recently about funding available for a new modernization grant following a meeting with the ESD construction management group. On Monday, February 26, the ESD construction management group took a thorough tour of Skamania School with the intention of submitting an application for the planning grant. The school plan from the most recent remodel was provided to the group. The construction team also thinks that with this new grant, new buildings with an equivalent square footage could be able to take the place of the current portables. If this funding is granted, improvements like windows, portables, restrooms, locker rooms, and perhaps even a covered play area would be made. The board was informed that setting up the showers in the locker rooms would be important due to Skamania School being a designated SafeZone. Millions of dollars in funding could be made accessible. Mr. Dennison mentioned that the planning grant is due in a couple of weeks. He plans to check for any underutilized space during the staff meeting on Wednesday.

- Instructional Program Report - Katie Chavarria

Mrs. Chavarria presented her instructional program report, which included information about Anne Gallagher's visit. Anne Gallagher works as an OSPI contracted math coach. Mrs. Gallagher intends to make the achievements public and expressed her satisfaction with the Illustrative Mathematics curriculum.

Mrs. Young stated that she likes the math curriculum Mrs. Chavarria has brought forward.

The first round of after-school groups started on Monday, February 26, Mrs. Chavarria continued. There will be another round of clubs following Spring Break, and the clubs were excellently run. It was good to see Mrs. Chavarria mentioned that several fresh faces who had been at Skamania for a while were able to participate in the first round of clubs.

March 1st marks the beginning of reading month, which includes an assortment of activities. beginning at 7:30 am on March 1st with the Dr. Seuss breakfast. A reading challenge, book fair, reading celebration day, and reading spirit week are among the additional events, explained Mrs. Chavarria. Students in the reading challenge will have the opportunity to "slime" Mrs. Chavarria.

Discussions for the Tk/K roundup for the spring have started, and some planning has already been done. One of the preliminary plans is to hold the roundup on a Saturday in late April or early May.

- Budget status report

Angus Anderson shared the budget status report sharing that it is in line with expectations for this time of year. The transportation budget is at \$178,378 due to the purchase of the buses.

- Legislative Report- Lisa Young

Lisa Young gave a report on her attendance at the legislative session. The session has less than two weeks remaining. Increasing financing for office personnel and paraprofessionals would be a prototypical approach.

The ultimate goal is to not have a spending cap on special education, although there will be an additional cap on special education spending at 17.5%. Financial help for small school districts is being discussed for this upcoming session; this assistance may be centered on the lawsuit filed by the Wahkiakum School District. The pay for state-funded employment will increase by 3.7%, while non-state-funded positions will still need to be covered out of district funds.

Mrs. Young said that the OSPI Superintendent, Chris Reykdal, advised "continuing to advocate for additional funding." One of the main points that came up was the need to bring up difficulties in the fall rather than in the middle of the session. Come and discuss in the fall so that lawmakers will be ready to tackle these topics when the session begins.

For each board member, Mrs. Young would like to compile a 10-page guide with information on finances, coding, the typical educational model, and glossary words. Hopefully, this will help with budget planning.

Comments from Skamania Board of Directors

Mr. Anderson shared his recent health scare in January.

Mrs. Young stated that she is happy that Mr. Anderson is fully recovered.

Mrs. Dominik-Medlin thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

Mrs. Young thanked everyone as well for coming to the meeting and sharing their comments.

Mr. Anderson asked when the spring newsletter will be out.

In order to create a timeline for the newsletter, Mr. Dennison announced that Mrs. Chavarria and Mrs. Warren will be meeting with the ESD 112 contact shortly.

Mr. LaFevers thanked everyone for coming and appreciated them being at the meeting.

Mr. Collins sees the challenge and would like to rise to the challenge as a board.

The board has requested that the March board meeting be rescheduled to March 25th due to scheduling conflicts.

Executive Session (RCW42.30.110)

To evaluate the qualifications of an applicant for public employment or to review the performance of a public employee.

Mrs. Young announced that the Skamania School Board will need 30 minutes in executive session.

The board entered into executive session at 7:53pm

Executive session ended at 8:17pm

Skamania School Board of directors returned to open session at 8:17pm

Upcoming Dates

Dr. Seuss Day Breakfast March 1st 7:30 am-8:30 am

Snow Make-up day- March 8th

Regular Board Meeting March 18th

St. Patrick’s Day Potluck and Game Night March 18th 5:30 pm-7:00 pm

Rowdy LaFevers moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:17pm. Cynthia Dominik Medlin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The board meeting adjourned at 8:17pm

Board Chair, _____

Board Secretary, _____