

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

**Minutes**

**March 25, 2024**

**6:30pm-8:30pm**

**Mrs. London's Room**

**[Zoom Link](#)**

**Meeting ID**

**285 593 9657**

**Passcode: 8t3C2U**

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

LaFevers

Staff: Milt Dennison, Katie Chavarria, Amber Warren and Heather Whitman

**Call to Order**

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

**Flag Salute**

**Changes to the agenda**

There were no changes to the agenda

**Public Comment**

There was no public in attendance for public comment

**Consent Agenda**

- Approval of the February 26th Regular Board Meeting Minutes
- Approval of the March 14th Board Workshop Minutes
- Approval of bills and payroll

Accounts payable check numbers 30033 through 30060 totaling \$27,046.93

Payroll and benefits (Payroll A/P) totaling \$110,658.68

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

## **Unfinished Business**

### **- Transportation Updates**

After Spring Break, there will be a double bus route. There was optimism that the burden on families could be lessened, but there isn't another option due to the lack of a second driver. Skamania School has been actively seeking a bus driver, but once the restrictions are disclosed, prospective candidates tend to lose interest.

Regarding the intended purchase of bus number 10 from White Salmon Valley School, Mrs. Warren provided an update. There has been an extended wait for word on when bus number 10 from the White Salmon Valley School District will be up for sale, due to the documentation processes among several other factors. Mrs. Warren further requested that the board be informed that, contrary to what was said in earlier meetings and recorded and in the previous minutes, bus number 10 had not yet been purchased from the White Salmon Valley School District.

Chairman Collins asked if a written contract existed for the planned purchase of bus number 10. The response to the question was that, no, there was never a formal agreement to buy the bus.

It was mentioned in a statement that White Salmon Valley SD has kindly loaned a bus several times and that we still wish to maintain good working interactions with them.

### **- HVAC System**

Johnson Barrow has discovered that the fuses are blown and the heat strips have melted. ESD 112 mentioned the potential need for a new HVAC unit to be installed. The same make and model of HVAC system that Skamania School has installed is also installed at another school in the state. This other district is having the same issues with their HVAC unit as Skamania.

Is this the same installer who visited Skamania School, as Chairman Collins questioned? Mrs. Young inquired as to whether Skamania School felt encouraged by the assistance provided by ESD 112. Mr. Dennison mentioned that it took some time to find ESD 112's new construction manager after the prior one left.

Concerns were also expressed about the schedule and the cost of a new unit if it was the best option. The response was that a meeting to discuss a report from ESD 112 and discuss the necessary next measures will be scheduled soon.

## Ceiling Tiles

Several of the classroom ceiling tiles had fallen. According to the evidence we have found so far, it appears the tiles may not have been part of the remodeling project. The Skamania repair crew is now investigating the most effective method for reinstalling the tiles. Members of the board questioned whether the crew had the equipment needed for the endeavor. According to Mr. Dennison, they certainly do. According to Mr. Dennison, the tiles initially seemed to be single-stapled.

## **New Business**

- 2024-2025 Budget Development Calendar

The amount of federal forest funds should be known, as well as the enrollment and staffing needs for the 24–25 school year, in mid–late April. Mr. Dennison proposed holding a board workshop to examine salaries early in May. At their meeting in April, the board members agreed to choose a date for the workshop.

- After School Childcare

Prior to the beginning of the 23–24 academic year, Mrs. Chavarria gave a summary of the childcare program. As previously mentioned, this program is self-supporting and aims to address the need for after-school care in our area. In the event that program expenses surpass program income, either raising the attendance fee or ending the program will have to be chosen. The late pick-up schedule, personnel concerns, and evening communication are additional challenges.

- Modernization Grant Application

A grant with funding of up to \$6 million and maybe up to \$12 million is available for small schools. There are restrictions, and replacing the portables would not be covered by the award. Skamania School will work with ESD 112 on construction management. The award would actually be put to use in 2025–2027. Security upgrades, fencing, roofing, seismic upgrading, HVAC ducting, plumbing, bathrooms, electricity, playground updates, parking lot, and flooring abatement are on the list that ESD 112 construction management has already put together. Board members inquired as to whether the gym could be expanded. In addition, consider whether the area currently occupied by the lunchroom could be put to greater use.

- Administrative Structure Survey Results

The board was briefed on the findings of the survey on administrative organization. Employees with certificates and those with classifications received the survey. Only eleven of the nineteen employees, though, completed the survey. In general, employees appear to feel that the current administration is supporting them. The one criticism that was brought up was the necessity for consistency in the disciplinary measures.

## **Reports**

### **- Superintendent's Report- Milt Dennison**

Mr. Dennison announced that Amber Hicks will be making a visit tomorrow. When Michelle Miller takes her maternity leave, Mrs. Hicks will teach some of her classes. Mrs. Hicks brings years of experience to Skamania in addition to her international teaching background.

### **- Instructional Program Report - Katie Chavarria**

\$3,200 has been donated to Camp Invention; \$2,700 of that total came from an anonymous source. Mrs. Chavarria expressed gratitude. These gifts will enable families to receive scholarships and lower the cost to as little as \$45 per family. Along with students from other districts such as Stevenson Carson and Washougal, families from Skamania School have also enrolled. The book fair has begun, and Skamania School is thrilled to be partnering with North Bank Books, a Stevenson-based local business, for this year's book fair. There are many different books to choose from. Staff will receive training in the upcoming weeks, and state testing will start shortly. Mrs. Chavarria revealed that the program from which she has sought a sample of the science curriculum is the same company that developed the math curriculum that was recently adopted. Additionally, Mrs. Chavarria announced that she had finished her principal certificate successfully!

### **- Budget status report- Donald**

Chairman Collins reported that the budget status report looks as it should for this time of year.

## **Comments from Skamania Board of Directors**

Rowdy LaFevers read a statement as follows:

As a Skamania School Board Director, (SSB) I am charged with a number of obligations to the Skamania School district that includes effective and efficient financial management. Budgetary decisions and planning occurs during every meeting. During the school year I follow budget plans that the board typically establishes beginning in March and finalize by May or June. The budget process considers projected funds available from the state of WA to our district and the Skamania school district levy status, last passed in 2023.

Like most financially solvent school districts, Skamania maintains a reserve fund. The reserve makes money available for planned or unplanned events of any type, but is typically used for things such as fluctuations in monthly state budget allocations, unexpected building repair, or necessary but unfunded modest improvements. Districts set their reserve fund amount based on a percentage of their yearly budget. Every budget year the SSB maintains a reserve goal of

20% of the school's annual budget. Reserve goals are not the same in all districts and there is no singular percentage goal that is appropriate for every district. Districts such as Camas set their reserve goal at a lower percentage. This percentage difference is because a larger district like Camas has a bigger budget, therefore an unexpected building repair will not have the same impact on their larger scaled budget and reserve. A building repair for Skamania will have a much different proportional impact on the our budget and reserve.

A bit about the Skamania school district levy. As a director on the SSB, I consider multi year budget projections and maintaining an appropriate school reserve fund when establishing levy rates. In my opinion a successful levy rate is one that balances minimizing the impact on our community tax base while making up expected state funding gaps to sufficiently fund school operations and expected expenditures. Under the existing three year levy and extended budget projections, the Skamania school reserve is expected to be mostly stable with a small but not worrisome decline over the levy lifetime.

For 2023/24, I worked on the SSB to set salary schedules for Skamania school employees that were aligned with the expected budget established by the WA state legislature. The salary schedule was increased over previous years to represent SSB best expectations for use of funds expected to be available through the state budgeting process. Neighboring district salary schedules were obtained, reviewed and considered as a reference base for Skamania school salary schedules. Skamania teachers and staff were offered contracts in May 2023 that at that time I felt were very competitive to our neighboring districts. Following the teacher strikes at the beginning of the 2023 school year our neighboring districts adjusted their salary schedules up, making the Skamania school existing contracts less competitive. Our neighbors salary increases have had significant impact on their operations. Positions and programs have been cut. Budget shortages are predicted and more layoffs are expected. Area district budget reserves are actively shrinking.

In early 2024 I voted that the SSB would not increase our salary schedule during the 23/24 contract year in response to changes in the districts around us. By vote that was not unanimous, the board chose to continue with the existing contracts as written. Changes to the 2023 salary contract schedule would have voided existing contracts. I felt the changes would heavily impact the school district reserve fund down to a level significantly less than the 20% reserve goal. I was concerned that the reduction in reserve would be very difficult to recover, possibly for many years, therefore putting school operations at risk. Instead I chose a longer view of making 24/25 salary schedules increasingly competitive so as not to adversely affect the 23/24 already established budget and having to make up the reduction of reserve funds that would have to be used for 23/24 temporary salary increases.

I intend to work with SSB to set the 24/25 salary schedule to be very competitive with our neighbors. As a SSB director I will work to continue offering increasing salaries over the upcoming years so our contracts remain competitive. I value all of our school staff tremendously and want employment at the Skamania School to be a rewarding experience where staff and teachers are recognized and competitively compensated for their efforts. The

Skamania School Board represents a volunteer group that is a slice of your community. I strive to be well informed and skillfully guide the management of the school budget. Thank you.

Mrs. Young asked about the St. Patrick's Day event. It went well, according to Mr. Dennison and Mrs. Chavarria. Mrs. Young inquired as to whether each child will be provided funds to purchase a book from the book fair this year. Mrs. Chavarria said that although not as much as in the past, there were still some funds available for students who might not be able to buy a book. Following the discussion, Mrs. Young requested to speak with Mrs. Chavarria about how she might assist with the funds.

Mrs. Dominik Medlin shared that there was an article in the Columbian newspaper regarding the topic of reserve funds for schools and it would be worthwhile to read.

Mr. LaFevers made the comment on how well the St. Patrick's Day event went and gave Mr. Dennison a compliment on his enthusiasm with bingo.

### **Executive Session (RCW42.30.110)**

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

Chairman Collins announced that the board would be going into executive session at 7:55pm and would need 15 minutes.

The board went into executive session at 7:55

The board returned to open session at 8:10pm

Once the board returned to open session there was a motion to be made regarding the administrative structure for the 24-25 school year.

Angus Anderson moved to approve the contracts for Katie Chavarria's principal position and the superintendent position for Milt Dennison at three days per week. The superintendent contract will be reevaluated in December. The motion was seconded by Rowdy LaFevers. The motion is approved by a unanimous vote.

### **Upcoming Dates**

Parent/Teacher Conference Week March 25th- March 29th

Book Fair March 25th-March 29th

Spring Break April 1st-5th

Regular Board Meeting April 15th

Lisa Young moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:12pm. Rowdy LaFevers seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The board meeting adjourned at 8:12pm

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

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