

MEETING MINUTES

VERNONIA SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD of DIRECTORS Regular Meeting – October 9, 2025 Vernonia Schools Library, 1000 Missouri Avenue, Vernonia

- 1.0 CALL TO ORDER:** A Regular Meeting of the Directors of Administrative School District 47J, Columbia County, Oregon was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Greg Kintz, Board Chair. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER
- Board Present:** Lisa Curry, Amy Cieloha, Greg Kintz and Alicia Mahoney BOARD PRESENT
Board Absent: Tony Holmes, Joanie Jones, and Javoss McGuire BOARD ABSENT
Staff Present: Jim Helmen, Superintendent; Michelle Eagleson, Elementary Principal; Susanne Myers, Special Education Director; Marie Knight, Business Manager; Mark Brown, Maintenance Supervisor; Barb Carr, Administrative Assistant; and Kendra Schlegel, Brett Costley, Denise Rowland, Lee Costanzo, Justin Benassi, Juliet Safier, Jennifer Schram, Rachel Brown, Olivia Keister, Rachel Plummer, Charise Ash, and Brittanie Roberts, Licensed Staff; and Karen Roberts, Classified Staff. Joining Virtually: Jessica Kintz, Peter Weisel, Dakota Jackson, Tabettha Groshong, Jen Cooper, Raynett Mann, Courtney Ferguson, Heidi Rice, Jennifer Adkins, Dawn Jay, Sena Wilmoth, Kristin Hansen, Chasity Smith, Robin Knutson, Julie Jenkins, Katreasa Beattie, Katie Budge, Summer Gonzales, Jennifer Draeger, and Camrin Eyrrick. STAFF PRESENT
- Visitors Present:** Brad Schultz, Amanda Rose Sicard, Daniel Glenn, Robert Sicard, C. Hartfeld, Olin Younger, Beth Kintz, Scott Laird, Bobbi Duncan, Joseph West, Leslie Triplett, Danny Byers, Malorie Baker, Tiffany McTaggart, and Matt McTaggart. Joining virtually Traci Wolf, Amanda, K. Hansen, Lisa, Alexis Scott, Kim B, Kristin Johnston, Suzco, Karla, James George, Billi Kohler, and Mr. Spaulding. VISITORS PRESENT
- 1.1** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
- 2.0 AGENDA REVIEW:** Lisa Curry moved to approve the agenda as presented. Alicia Mahoney seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously with those in attendance. AGENDA REVIEW
- 3.0 PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA and NON-AGENDA ITEMS:** PUBLIC COMMENT
Olin Younger, 69432 Fishhawk Rd, Birkenfeld, spoke on behalf of his daughter Katy Davis, who along with her partner, Jessica, teach for Vernonia Ballet. They hold their community recitals in our commons and feel the lighting is inadequate.

Robert Sicard, 61400 Stoney Pt. Rd. Reported issues he has witnessed while volunteering in the school building.

Daniel Glenn, no address given, expressed concerns about absence of transparency and assumptions being made online.
- 4.0 BUSINESS REPORTS:**
- 4.1 Administrator Reports:** All Administrator reports were provided to the Board prior to the meeting. ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS

Michelle Eagleson shared that her teachers are doing a fantastic job with strategies. Engagement is going great and she is very proud of her staff.

Alicia Mahoney shared her pleasure of seeing that our Special Education Department is participating in Special Olympics Unified.
- 4.2 Superintendent Report:** The Superintendent report was provided to the Board prior to the meeting. SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Jim Helmen highlighted that both the policy for electronic devices and related AR are on the agenda for both the 1st and 2nd reading tonight. Reports indicate that the cell phone ban is going pretty well and noted that student engagement has increased.

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| | <p>4.2.1 SIA Annual Report: As a requirement of the Oregon Department of Education, the District has completed its Student Investment Account (SIA) annual update for the 2024-25 year. The review focuses on progress toward longitudinal targets in graduation, attendance, and academic outcomes. Overall, the District met or exceeded all SIA targets with the exception of the four-year graduation rate and regular attenders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduation Rates: The District fell short of the four-year target goal but exceeded the five-year goal. • Attendance: Chronic Absenteeism rose in 2024-25 causing the District to fall short of the state's benchmark. • Academic Outcomes: The District outperformed the 9th grade on-track goal as well as the third-grade proficiency target. | SIA ANNUAL REPORT |
| 4.3 | <p>Financial Report: Marie Knight shared that she did not provide a general fund report as the a financial presentation is on the agenda. A Student Body report will be provided next month.</p> | FINANCIAL REPORT |
| 4.4 | <p>Maintenance Report: Mark Brown's report was provided to the Board prior to the meeting.</p> | MAINTENANCE REPORT |
| | <p>A question was asked if there were currently any custodial vacancies. According to Mr. Helmen, at this time, no. There is one staff member out on extended sick leave and there is discussion of hiring a temporary sub.</p> | |
| | <p>An update on the Mist water status was provided. The district is looking into bids to replace the toilet system. So far this school year there has not been any issues. Water is being turned off on Fridays and staff are checking to ensure toilets aren't continueing to run before they leave each day. The cost to have portable toilets on site is \$600 per month and will be compared to any bids for replacement that are received.</p> | |
| | <p>Discussion was held on the baseball and softball field's fertilizing schedule. Currently the infield gets fertilized in the Spring and again in the Fall if there is money left in the budget. All fields will green up with rain. The board asked Mr. Helmen to look into the total cost of fertilizer.</p> | |
| 5.0 | <p>BOARD REPORTS/ BOARD DEVELOPMENT:</p> | |
| | <p>5.1 Committee Reports:</p> | |
| | <p>5.1.1 Policy Committee: Policy JFCEB - Personal Electronic Devices was presented and reviewed. The mandate stipulates the cell phone ban is in effect bell-to-bell each day. This includes all field trips taken during the school day but after school athletic trips do not apply. Per the mandate, the policy must be adopted by October 31st and fully implemented by January 1, 2026.</p> | COMMITTEE UPDATES POLICY COMIMTTEE |
| | <p>5.1.2 Safety Committee: Amy Cieloha, the board liaison on the safety committee shared that she wasn't clear how the new committee for students would be organized as it wasn't clear at the last meeting she attended. Marie Knight shared that it is a requirement of OSHA to have a safety committee for staff. A student focused safety committee is not a requirement but something the district's safety committee wants to have. Last year committee staff held two different meetings, one for staff and one for student. At the September 2025 meeting the committee discussed having a separate committee with different staff members.</p> | SAFETY COMMITTEE |
| | <p>5.1.3 Scholarship Committee: The committee will hold a meeting on October 30, 2025 to review the scholarship descriptions and the scoring sheet.</p> | SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE |
| 6.0 | <p>OTHER INFORMATION and DISCUSSION</p> | |
| 6.1 | <p>Policy Update JFCEB – Personal Electronic Devices and JFCEB-AR Request for Personal Electronic Devices Exception was discussed earlier in the meeting during the Superintendent Report.</p> | POLICY 1 st & 2 nd READING |
| 6.2 | <p>Division 22 Standards: The Division 22 Standards are a set of state standards each district must have to be able to function. The Vernonia School District has met all standards with the exception of the English Language Arts adoption. The District will not meet that standard this year due to budgetary issues. The District must submit a plan to the state of how we plan</p> | DIVISION 22 STANDARDS REPORT |

to move to compliant. Mr. Helmen stated he is hoping next year's budget will allow for this adoption.

- 6.3 Class Size / Enrollment Report:** As of October 1st there are 584 students enrolled in the District. This is an increase from the end of last year, with the middle school showing the majority of the growth. Enrollment numbers are watched carefully, especially those students dropped due to the 10-day rule.

CLASS SIZE /
ENROLLMENT REPORT

- 6.4 Resolution #2026-01:** Jim Helmen shared that over the last month there has been a lot of planning around potential staff reductions. He recognized the teacher union representatives, Brett Costley and Juliet Safier, for their involvement.

RESOLUTION #2026-01
AUTHORIZING THE
DISTRICT TO MAKE MID-
YEAR STAFF
REDUCTIONS

Making mid-year reductions will save the most money. The financial shortfall will be greater if reductions are made at the end of the year. The District's current financials were reviewed and Jim Helmen explained that expenditures came in higher, including 16% contract obligations, and revenue came in lower. The State School Fund payment that is received in May reconciles the previous two years. If the State has over paid the District based on estimated projections of enrollment, etc. over the previous two years, the District must submit payment back to ODE to cover the overage.

Previously the transportation grant reimbursed the District at 80% and that reimbursement rate decreased to 70%. The District budgeted for an 80% reimbursement.

The District held an internal audit to make sure nothing has been done incorrectly. Systems are in place to be able to adjust earlier going forward. Superintendent Helmen and the Business Manager are meeting monthly.

Alicia Mahoney stated she felt there should have been more transparency and communication last May during the budget season. She understands the uncertainty and felt that bringing in an auditor was a good idea. It was shared that the District expects revenue to come in through the months of July and August. Waiting for any additional funds to arrive provided more understanding of the complete picture. Mr. Helmen stated that had the information been available last May during the budget process, the same reductions would have occurred. A suggestion was made to make sure the ACH and wire transfer limits are set the same as the check signing limits.

Amy Cieloha and Lisa Curry echoed the comments of a lack of transparency and wishing the information would have been available to the Budget Committee.

Greg Kintz shared that the District thankfully has budgeted conservatively over the years. The \$500K the District had available helped to offset the repayment.

Mr. Helmen stated that he hopes enrollment will increase which in turn will help the ending fund balance. He supported the process the District went through as opposed to a knee jerk reaction without fully understanding the picture. He indicated that if reductions don't happen at this time the District will continue to fall into the negative resulting in more reductions at the end of the year.

There were no other questions from the Board. Greg Kintz opened the floor up for audience questions.

Brett Costley, VEA Presidents, shared that the 16% increase mentioned earlier is the teacher pay increase, which is still behind other districts.

Amanda Sicard inquired about supports the District will offer those staff impacted by the reductions. Mr. Helmen stated that the District is helping by writing letters of recommendation, contacting other Districts, possibly extending insurance coverage, and offering counseling services if needed.

Tiffany McTaggart asked if a student goes home early does that day count against their attendance and earning the popcorn reward? No.

Denise Rowland asked if there is a simple way to explain the transportation funding? No, the District had no control over the underpayment in transportation reimbursements.

Greg Kintz read aloud the resolution being considered which authorizes the District to make mid-year staff reductions.

7.0 ACTION ITEMS

7.1 Policy Approval: Amy Cieloha moved to approve policy JFCEB-Personal Electronic Devices and JFCEB-AR Request for Personal Electronic Devices Exception as presented and discussed. Lisa Curry seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously with those in attendance. POLICY JFCEB and JFCEB-AR APPROVED

7.2 Resolution #2026-01: Lisa Curry moved to approve Resolution #2026-01 approving mid-year staff reductions for the 2025-26 school year as presented and discussed. Alicia Mahoney seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously with those in attendance. RESOLUTION #2026-01 APPROVED

8.0 MONITORING BOARD PERFORMANCE: Nothing discussed. MONITORING BOARD PERFORMANCE

9.0 CONSENT AGENDA: CONSENT AGENDA

9.1 Minutes of 09/11/2025 Regular Meeting.
Alicia Mahoney moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. Amy Cieloha seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously with those in attendance. CONSENT AGENDA APPROVED

10.0 OTHER ISSUES: OTHER ISSUES

Has the drinking fountain on the playground been repaired? No, this will have to wait until next year.

It was proposed that next year the Board meeting not be held during homecoming week.

Board members felt the required training for them was random, specifically the drug and alcohol training with teenagers.

A comment was made that the District needs to be proactive in communicating with the After School Program when the building isn't available.

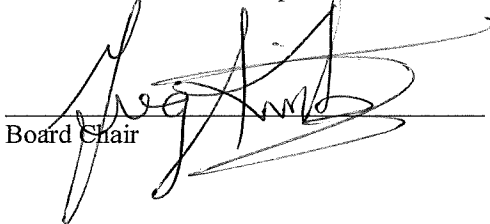
The next agenda setting meeting will be Jim Helmen, Greg Kintz, and Amy Cieloha. The virtual meeting will be Wednesday, November 5th at 5:00 p.m.

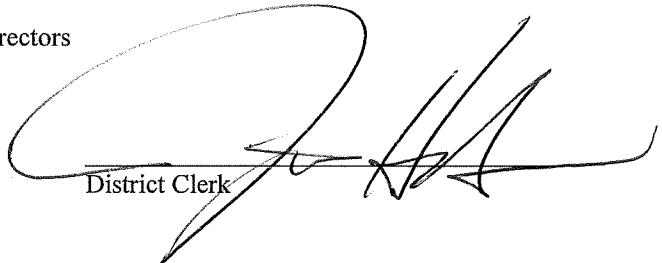
11.0 UPCOMING DATES: UPCOMING DATES

October 30, 2025 – Scholarship Committee meeting 6:00 p.m.
November 13, 2025 – Board Meeting 6:00 p.m. at Mist Elementary

12.0 MEETING ADJOURNED at 7:47 p.m. ADJOURNED

Submitted by Barb Carr,
Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent and Board of Directors


Board Chair


District Clerk