

MEETING MINUTES

VERNONIA SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD of DIRECTORS Regular Meeting – January 8, 2026 Vernonia Schools Building, 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 6:00 p.m. by Greg Kintz, Board Chair. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER
- Board Present:** Greg Kintz, Joanie Jones, Amy Cieloha, Lisa Curry and Alicia Mahoney
Board Absent: Tony Holmes and Javoss McGuire
Staff Present: Jim Helmen, Superintendent; Nate Underwood, Middle High School Principal; Michelle Eagleson, Elementary Principal; Marie Knight, Business Manager; Barb Carr, Administrative Assistant; Brett Costley and Kendra Schlegel, Licensed Staff; and Camrin Eyrrick and Karen Roberts, Classified Staff. BOARD PRESENT
BOARD ABSENT
STAFF PRESENT
- Visitors Present:** Steve Whiteman, Greg Brody, Scott Laird, and Tiffany McTaggart VISITORS PRESENT
- 1.1** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
1.2 School Board Appreciation: Jim Helmen offered his thanks and shared that he appreciates the work and time given by board members. He also acknowledged Greg Kintz for the work he does with OSBA and other agencies, all of which helps to put Vernonia on the map. Certificates and cards of thanks signed by staff were presented to board members. SCHOOL BOARD RECOGNITION MONTH
- 2.0 AGENDA REVIEW:** A couple changes were noted. The consent agenda motion to approve the minutes should be changed to “approve as amended”. There has been a small adjustment to the minutes. Under Other Issues, setting a date for a special meeting in February to hear the findings on complaints received has been added. AGENDA REVIEW
Alicia Mahoney moved to approve the agenda as amended. Amy Cieloha seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously with those in attendance.
- 3.0 PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA and NON-AGENDA ITEMS:** PUBLIC COMMENT
Chief Greg Brody, Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District shared that he has been meeting and getting to know all the community civic organizations and he wanted to introduce himself to the school board. He is a firm believer in building relationships and collaborating with community partners. He participates and partners with the VHS Fire Science program which is a great program and he and his department try to attend sporting and community events. He further shared that in May the Fire Department will be putting a measure on the ballot in support of operational expenses and necessary equipment upgrades.

Steve Whiteman shared his compliments for the strong community connection with the school. He feels Spanish, America’s second language, should be taught in our schools and students need to be participating in academic competition such as Knowledge Bowls, etc.
- 4.0 SHOWCASING OF SCHOOLS**
- 4.1 Administrator Reports:** All Administrator reports were provided to the Board prior to the meeting. ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS
Alicia Mahoney asked for an explanation regarding the few enrollment drops. Jim Helmen stated he would have to research this and get back to the Board.

Nate Underwood shared that he and Pete Weisel, MS/HS Counselor, have been working with Youth Era. They hold meetings with 8th grade boys called “beyond the locker room” that focuses on self-esteem, getting along, and perseverance. Yesterday they held an assembly for all middle and high school students on mental health and it’s connection to physical activity.

Winter Formal is scheduled for February 7, 2026.
- 5.0 BUSINESS REPORTS:**
- 5.1 Superintendent Report:** The Superintendent report was provided to the Board prior to the SUPERINTENDENT

meeting.

REPORT

Mr. Helmen was asked if he felt the attendance incentives are working. Yes. It's not reflective of our "not chronically absent" percentages but huge engagement jumps are being seen. Attendance is now being taken twice a day and we have two staff members focusing on attendance. The plan to start doing home-checks and more intensive connection with families is in the works by working with the ESD attendance team.

Is there a point when parents are contacted? Yes, our attendance staff and building principals contact parents when needed to put a plan in place.

Are the budget staff surveys confidential? Yes.

5.1.1 Superintendent Goals Mid-Year Review: Mr. Helmen provided a written review updating the board on his work towards his annual goals. The report listed the goal, the objective of the goal, key strategies for achieving the goal, the success measure, and the alignment of the goal to the strategic plan. Each goal, supporting information and summarized status are as follows:

SUPERINTENDENT
GOALS MID-YEAR
REVIEW

Goal 1: Operate the District in a fiscally prudent manner while balancing education needs and opportunities: Status: At mid-year, the District is partially meeting Goal 1. Limited resources have been successfully aligned to high-priority attendance, instructional, and student support initiatives, despite significant fiscal challenges.

Goal 2: Ensure instruction utilizes culturally responsive practices with staff trained. Status: The District's intentional professional development, PLC structures, and intervention systems ensure culturally responsive and high-impact instructional practices are embedded across classrooms, with equitable access prioritized for all students.

Goal 3: Implement Structures to help hire and retain quality personnel. Status: Significant progress has been made toward Goal 3. Systems are actively supporting teacher growth, morale, and retention while reinforcing equitable access to professional development and high-impact instructional practices.

Goal 4: Increase K-12 students' social-emotional, mental, and behavioral health supports. Status: Mid-year progress demonstrates a comprehensive, data-driven approach to SEL, mental health, attendance, and student engagement, positioning the District to meet its success measure by the end of the 2025-26 school year.

Goal 5. Ensure effective District governance through positive board and community relations. Status: Mid-year progress demonstrates strong alignment with Goal 5, fostering effective governance, positive relationships and community trust while maintaining active advocacy for small district needs.

5.2 Financial Report: Marie Knight provided her financial reports and noted that they were run on January 2nd and at that point in time all the December transactions hadn't been entered. It is based on estimates instead of actual numbers. Overall the ending fund balance has increased slightly.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Marie shared that on the Expense Report Month to Date the large increase seen in purchased services and supplies and materials is due to the timing of payments to NWRESD for our annual technology support and large expenses for our financial and education software.

A question was asked regarding the notation at the top of each section stating the percentage of budget. Is the percentage for accounts in that section only? Yes.

Jim Helmen asked the board if these reports are meeting what they wanted? The consensus was yes.

An updated Student Body Account balance progress report will be presented in February. A question was asked regarding checks submitted to the student body accounts. The amount has not changed from the last report. Marie directed them to contact Teresa Williams in the high

school office.

5.2.1 Budget Calendar: Marie Knight shared the budget calendar for this meeting to develop the 2026-27 budget. It is similar to the last few years, giving committee members adequate time to review the budget between the 1st and 2nd meeting.

DRAFT BUDGET
CALENDAR SHARED

5.3 Maintenance Report: Mark Brown's report was provided to the Board prior to the meeting. He continues to have issues with the wall dividers in the boys' restroom. The students are hanging on them.

MAINTENANCE REPORT

Discussion was held on the field nets by the baseball field. There are holes in the nets that need to be repaired and deer are getting hung up in the nets. Perhaps they would be raised up in the off season.

BASEBALL FIELD NETS

Mist has reported that they are blowing the breakers during lunch time with too much draw from microwaves, etc. Joanie Jones stated that this happened to her however she rearranged the room so that everything was not on the same wall and drawing from the same circuits.

MIST BREAKERS IN
LUNCHROOM

Jim Helmen shared that the *I Love You Guys* protocol for lock down and other safety procedures has been completed for Mist.

MIST SAFETY
PROTOCOLS
COMPLETED

Joanie Jones shared that during hunting season, someone in the community witnessed someone shooting an elk on school property. Mr. Helmen stated that no hunting signage will be purchased and installed.

NO HUNTING SIGNAGE
TO BE INSTALLED

6.0 BOARD REPORTS/ BOARD DEVELOPMENT:

6.1 Committee Reports:

COMMITTEE UPDATES
POLICY COMMITTEE

6.1.1 Policy Committee: The committee met and will have policies for first reading at the February meeting.

6.1.2 Safety Committee: Nothing reported.

SAFETY COMMITTEE

6.1.3 Scholarship Committee: Nothing reported.

SCHOLARSHIP
COMMITTEE

70 OTHER INFORMATION and DISCUSSION

7.1 Calendar Update: Due to power outages and school cancelled on Dec. 17 and 18, the first two potential snow make-up days on the calendar will now be school days. These dates are February 27 and April 10.

CALENDAR UPDATE

7.2 NWRESD Local Service Plan for 2026-27: It is required that each school board approve the ESD's service plan for the following year. Jim Helmen shared that the ESD provides services at a cost, mostly for special education, to small schools who don't need a full FTE person. These areas include an autism consultant, behavior and occupational therapists, deaf and hard of hearing, nursing and physical therapy services, etc. Other services we receive through the ESD are technology services, business payroll services, early childhood education services, and dual credit with Willamette Promise. Utilizing the ESD services helps to promote equity of available services to small districts.

NWRESD LOCAL
SERVICE PLAN 2026-27
SHARED

There are services provided to our District at no cost. These include attendance, CTE Revitalization, Early Learning Hub, Migrant Education, Oregon Math Project, Regional Educator Network, STEM Hub, and others.

Superintendent Helmen's recommendation is to approve the Local Service plan as presented.

8.0 ACTION ITEMS

8.1 Budget Calendar: Alicia Mahoney moved to approve the 2026 Budget Calendar as presented. Amy Cieloha seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously with those in attendance.

BUDGET CALENDAR
APPROVED

8.2 NWRESD Local Service Plan: Amy Cieloha moved to approve the NWRESD's 2026-27 Local Service Plan as presented. Joanie Jones seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously with those in attendance.

NWRESD LOCAL
SERVICE PLAN
APPROVED

9.0 **MONITORING BOARD PERFORMANCE:** Nothing discussed.

MONITORING BOARD PERFORMANCE

10.0 **CONSENT AGENDA:**

CONSENT AGENDA

10.1 Minutes of 12/11/2025 Regular Meeting and the 12/15/2025 Special Meeting.

Lisa Curry moved to approve the consent agenda as amended – 12/11/25 minutes item 6.1.3 adjusted typo. Alicia Mahoney seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously with those in attendance.

CONSENT AGENDA APPROVED

11.0 **OTHER ISSUES:**

OTHER ISSUES

Next Agenda Setting Meeting – Wednesday, February 4th at 5:00 p.m. Lisa Curry volunteered to join Jim Helmen and Greg Kintz.

NEXT AGENDA SETTING MEETING

Discussion was held to set a date for a Special Meeting to hear the findings of the investigation of complaints received. Two options were determined, Tuesday, February 17th or Thursday, February 19th at 5:00 p.m. Greg Kintz will share these dates with the District attorney and will let everyone know when the meeting date is confirmed.

SPECIAL MEETING DATE OPTIONS DETERMINED

Amy Cieloha requested that something come out from the high school for senior parents regarding sports eligibility and credits.

SPORTS ELIGIBILITY INFO REQUESTED

12.0 **UPCOMING DATES:**

UPCOMING DATES

January 19, 2026 – NO SCHOOL, Martin Luther King Holiday

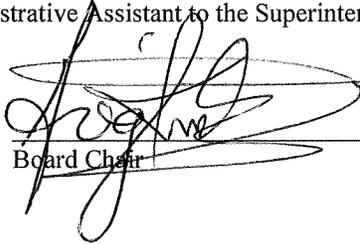
January 23, 2026 – NO SCHOOL, Teacher Work Day, End of 2nd 9 weeks/1st Semester

February 12, 2026 – School Board Meeting, 6:00 p.m.

13.0 **MEETING ADJOURNED** at 7:50 p.m.

ADJOURNED

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



Board Chair



District Clerk