

MEETING MINUTES

VERNONIA SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD of DIRECTORS Regular Meeting – March 12, 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:** Tony Holmes, Lisa Curry, Amy Cieloha, Alicia Mahoney, Joanie Jones, and Greg Kintz BOARD PRESENT
- Board Absent:** Javoss McGuire BOARD ABSENT
- Staff Present:** Jim Helmen, Superintendent; Nate Underwood, Middle High School Principal; Michelle Eagleson, Elementary Principal; Marie Knight, Business Manager; Barb Carr, Administrative Assistant; Mark Brown, Maintenance Supervisor; Kendra Schlegel, Brett Costley, Ashley Ward, Jennifer Schram, Juliet Safier, and Rachel Brown, Licensed Staff; and Debbie Johnston and Karen Roberts, Classified Staff. STAFF PRESENT
- Visitors Present:** Scott Laird, Beth (last name not provided), Charlotte Schlegel, and Nova Gleason 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
- Brett Costley spoke in regards of upcoming listening session scheduled for the night of the conferences. He requested a second opportunity for staff. He also spoke regarding action taken at last meeting when it was stated prior to executive session that there wouldn't be action afterwards.
- Juliet Safier, spoke regarding recent staffing cuts and the burdens placed on others. She is hoping the budget committee will take this into consideration and requests that the college and career readiness position be a certified position.
- 4.0 SHOWCASING OF SCHOOLS**
- 4.1 Administrator Reports:** All Administrator reports were provided to the Board prior to the meeting. ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS
- Comments on the elementary report included being curious how the students dressed to look "old". According to Mrs. Eagleson students came with grey hair, wrinkles, walked with canes, and even had curlers in their hair. When asked how many students were eligible for the extra recess as an attendance reward, she stated a lot. Alicia Mahoney noted that the reading intervention is starting to click with students and compliments were given to the staff.
- Kendra Schlegel spoke about intervention core review meetings. The data clearly shows improvement. Currently, only four 3rd grade students aren't quite 100% at grade level. The implemented strategies are making a difference. Writing data has been looked at through intervention review and staff are reviewing the data in their PLC groups. Discussions are also happening around how to get the students ready for state testing. Their stamina is so much better than it was a year and a half ago.
- Amy Cieloha asked Mr. Underwood for an update on the building bridges, clearing paths campaign. According to Mr. Underwood, it's going pretty well. There was work to do after the initial staff meetings so primary and secondary staff held separate sessions and then came together as a K-12 staff. Their work, focusing on the positive, was taken by administration and put into 5 categories or pillars:
- Relationships
 - Communication
 - Professionalism
 - Well-Being

- Mindset

When asked if he felt all staff were able to contribute equally, he explained the process was set up so that all could contribute equally if they wished.

Juliet Safier shared an update on VHS Scholarships. Currently there is a Google Classroom for seniors that contains all information they need. The goal is to have everything to Seniors by March 31st with a scholarship packet due date of April 30th.

Charlotte Schlegel and Nova Gleason, VHS Leadership students updated the Board on recent and upcoming events.

- 4.2 **Winter Sports Report:** A written report was provided to the Board. It was shared that bus driver Linda Christopherson was recognized at the Winter Sports Dessert for her performance in the recent athletic school bus accident heading to Nestucca. The Nestucca School District was also recognized for their support.

WINTER SPORTS REPORT

5.0 **BUSINESS REPORTS:**

- 5.1 **Superintendent Report:** The Superintendent report was provided to the Board prior to the meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Superintendent Helmen was asked if he is expecting to have to make additional cuts during this year’s budget process. According to Superintendent Helmen he is not expecting to do this but they still must go through the process of looking at numbers, core requirements and also reviewing Board and SIP goals. The short legislative session did not have additional cuts to the education budget so the district has a pretty good idea of what the ending fund balance will be. Helmen further shared that what is needed is to focus on every student getting what they need. He can’t answer one way or the other at this time but will know more in a couple of weeks. This will not be an isolated decision, it’s an administrative decision focusing on the district’s three goals:

- High academic rigor
- CTE programming
- Social / Emotional supports

The main question currently is how to maintain the above goals and infuse an administrative position in Special Education or Student Services that can manage special education and other administrative tasks.

Lisa Curry asked if it is anticipated that the budget will be more user friendly, especially in the area of staff FTE? According to Mr. Helmen, yes, a summary will be provided.

Amy Cieloha stated that she is hoping extra attention will be given to the College and Career Readiness option and that Spanish be offered next year. She also commented on having Outdoor School funded when a good portion of these students have just attended the local summer camp where very similar activities are being offered.

Alicia Mahoney asked if the Board will receive a copy of the workforce survey given to staff. Yes, when it is ready Mr. Helmen will share it with the Board.

Classified Appreciation Week was held the first week in March. Our District has incredible classified staff. The work they do on daily basis is amazing.

Superintendent Helmen recognized retiring staff at the end of this year.

- Mark Brown, Maintenance Supervisor – 19 years of service
- Marie Knight, Business Manager – 18 years of service
- Pete Weisel – MS/HS Counselor – 18 years of service
- Sena Wilmoth – Mist 3rd-5th Teacher – 5 years of service
- Theresa Gray – Instructional Assistant – 25 years of service

A question was asked on the enrollment report of where the students enrolled in a hybrid model land on the report? They are in the VHS numbers according to Mr. Helmen.

A comment from a couple months ago was revisited by Amy Cieloha in regards to OSAA eligibility. A lengthy discussion followed. OSAA guidelines state students must be taking and passing 5 classes regardless if it is a dual credit or regular credit class.

Open campus for seniors and juniors in good standing was confirmed. This is not available for anyone else. This information has been sent out to families.

5.2 Financial Report: The financial report was provided to the Board prior to the meeting. Marie Knight shared that the ending fund balance has not changed much and the report is in the same format as last month. The fee for the Superintendent Search will be encumbered in April. The Student Body accounts will be fully reviewed by the end of the year. Clarification on the Athletic Fund was asked. Marie Knight shared this is for general athletic purchases. FINANCIAL REPORT

5.3 Maintenance Report: Mark Brown's report was provided to the Board prior to the meeting. The board inquired about the continuation of damage to the restrooms. Can dividers be replaced with a more sturdy option? Mark indicated he can look into this but the majority of the damage is to the doors not to the dividers. MAINTENANCE REPORT

Spring sports prep work has been happening which includes field lines, turning water back on in the lines, snack shack garbage cans, etc. The baseball field needs drainage on the back fence line and Mark Brown will get an estimate to have this work done to get the fields playable.

Discussion was held on the conflict of holding the District basketball tournament at the same time as having a facility use approval for the Seattle Cascades Drum and Bugle Corp. Communication to have Seattle Cascades clean things up as well as highlight to the visiting basketball fans that we have students from all over the world here, would be helpful.

5.3.1 Mist Elementary Maintenance Update: Currently only 10 hours per week are available for Mist custodial / maintenance work which is not sustainable. Mr. Helmen stated they are looking at what changes can be done for next year. Fences will be power washed over Spring break. Joanie Jones offered to help. MIST MAINTENANCE UPDATE

6.0 BOARD REPORTS/ BOARD DEVELOPMENT:

6.1 Committee Reports:

- 6.1.1 Policy Committee:** Policy presented later for 2nd reading
- 6.1.2 Safety Committee:** Nothing reported
- 6.1.3 Scholarship Committee:** Nothing reported

COMMITTEE REPORTS
POLICY COMMITTEE
SAFETY COMMITTEE
SCHOLARSHIP COMM.

70 OTHER INFORMATION and DISCUSSION

7.1 2026-27 Instructional Calendar Options: Two options were presented for consideration of approval at the April meeting. The main difference between the two options is that option A has a teacher work day at the conclusion of winter break and option B has the teacher work day at the conclusion of the 1st semester. 2026-27 INSTRUCTIONAL CALENDAR OPTIONS DISCUSSED

7.2 Policy Updates – The following policies were presented for a second reading.

- 7.1.1 BBBB –** Board Member Oath of Office
- 7.1.2 BH/BHA –** Orientation of New Board Members
- 7.1.3 CGB –** Evaluation of the Superintendent
- 7.1.4 CHCA –** Handbooks
- 7.1.5 CI –** Temporary Administrative Arrangements
- 7.1.6 DBD –** Budget Priorities
- 7.1.7 DD –** Grant Funding Proposals and Applications
- 7.1.8 DL –** Payroll
- 7.1.9 FFA –** Memorials
- 7.1.10 GB –** General Personnel Policies
- 7.1.11 GBG –** Staff Participation in Political Activities
- 7.1.12 IFD –** Course Approval
- 7.1.13 IGBHC-AR –** Notice for Alternative Education
- 7.1.14 IGBHC –** Alternative Education Notification
- 7.1.15 JFCA –** Student Dress and Grooming
- 7.1.16 KBCA –** News Release
- 7.1.17 KK –** Visitors to District Facilities

POLICY UPDATES
PRESENTED AS SECOND
READING

- 7.3 **Staffing Updates:** Mr. Helmen shared during his Superintendent report those staff leaving the district at the end of the year. Postings will start to go out next week. STAFFING UPDATES
- 8.0 **ACTION ITEMS**
- 8.1 **Policy Approval:** Joanie Jones moved to approve policy updates listed in item 7.2. Alicia Mahoney seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously with those in attendance. POLICY UPDATES APPROVED
- 8.2 **Staff Retirements:** Lisa Curry moved to accept the retirement of staff members Mark Brown, Maintenance Supervisor; Marie Knight, Business Manager; Peter Weisel, MS/HS Counselor; Sena Wilmoth, Mist 3rd-5th Teacher; and Theresa Gray, Instructional Assistant effective June 30, 2026. Amy Cieloha seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously with those in attendance. BROWN, KNIGHT, WEISEL, WILMOTH & GRAY RETIREMENTS ACCEPTED
- 9.0 **MONITORING BOARD PERFORMANCE:** Greg Kintz shared all are doing a great job working as a team. Clarification on the plan for the March 18th community listen session was provided. MONITORING BOARD PERFORMANCE
- 10.0 **CONSENT AGENDA:** CONSENT AGENDA
- 10.1 Minutes of 02/12/2026 Regular Meeting, 02/19/2026 Special Meeting, and the 03/04/2026 Special Meeting.
Alicia Mahoney moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. Lisa Curry seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously with those in attendance. CONSENT AGENDA APPROVED
- 11.0 **RECESS to EXECUTIVE SESSION** under O.R.S. 192.660 (2)(i) "To review and evaluate the performance of the chief executive officer or any other public officer, employee or staff member..." at 8:37 p.m. RECESS to EXECUTIVE SESSION
- The Board reviewed the 2025-26 annual evaluation for Superintendent Jim Helmen.
- 12.0 **RETURN to REGULAR SESSION** at 9:17 p.m. RETURN TO REGULAR SESSION
- 13.0 **ACTION ITEMS**
- 13.1 **Licensed and Administrative Staff Contract Renewal:** Joanie Jones moved to approve Licensed Staff Extension resolution #2026-03 and the Administrative Contract Extension resolution #2026-04 as presented. Lisa Curry seconded the motion. Alicia Mahoney abstained from voting. No reason was provided. All others voted in favor of the motion. Motion passed. LICENSED & ADMINISTRATIVE CONTRACT EXTENSIONS APPROVED.
- 13.2 **Superintendent Annual Evaluation:** Alicia Mahoney moved to approve the 2025-26 annual evaluation of Superintendent Jim Helmen. Joanie Jones seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously with those in attendance. ANNUAL SUPT. EVALUATION APPROVED
- 13.0 **OTHER ISSUES:** Next Agenda Setting Meeting – Wednesday, April 1st at 5:00 p.m. Joanie Jones volunteered to join Jim Helmen and Greg Kintz. OTHER ISSUES
- 14.0 **UPCOMING DATES:** UPCOMING DATES
- March 18, 2026 – Special Meeting/Work Session – 5:30 pm.
March 18 & 19, 2026 – K-12 Conferences
March 20, 2026 – No School – Teacher Trade Day
March 23 – 27, 2026 – No School – Spring Break
April 6, 2026 – Policy Committee 5:00 p.m. Virtual
April 9, 2026 – School Board Meeting – 6:00 p.m. at Mist
- 15.0 **MEETING ADJOURNED** at 9:30 p.m. ADJOURNED

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



Board Chair



District Clerk

03-12-2026

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