

## **MINUTES**

### **ASD BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING WITH STATE LEGISLATORS**

February 3, 2021

#### **PRESENT:**

##### Budget Committee Members

Curt Bacon

Peter Caudle

Victor Chang

Mark Decker

Jill Franko

Tomas Monter-Rangel

Sabrina Prud'homme

Eva Skuratowicz

Jim Westrick

Chris Chambers – absent

##### Staff and Observers

Finance Director Alana Valencia

Superintendent Samuel Bogdanove

Operations Director Steve Mitzel

OSEA representative Serena Robinson

Board Secretary Jacqueline Schad

**GUESTS:** Oregon State Senator Jeff Golden and  
Oregon State Representative Pam Marsh

Board Chair Skuratowicz called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. The meeting began with Chair Skuratowicz asking the members and staff present to introduce themselves, and she introduced Sen. Golden and Rep. Marsh. Sen. Golden described the current operating arrangements for the legislature. The legislators are spending a day a week in Salem, and working remotely the rest of the time. The lack of time to work together on normal issues is resulting in somewhat less clarity about progress. Top priorities are the COVID-19 pandemic, the remediation for and prevention of wild fires, and issues of racial equity in the wake of Black Lives Matter and other racial justice matters. There is some continuing fear of armed protestors and their recent incursions into the State Capitol, which is now not open to the public. Legislators are required to be present for floor sessions that are scheduled to advance legislation. Otherwise, they are on Zoom or MS TEAMS. This may result in fewer bills being enacted in this biennial session.

Rep. Marsh added that two years ago, passage of the Student Success Act was a clear priority for the governor and key legislators. This year, recovery from crises impacting residents across the state is the priority, especially fire recovery, but also the impact of lockdowns resulting from the pandemic. The administration is very focused on supporting K-12 education, which is currently receiving more favorable funding than is true of higher education. The state currently lacks clear plans for how to move forward post-high school and the funding reflects that. Early childhood is a top priority for Governor Brown.

Prior to the meeting, Sen. Golden shared a list proposed bills pertinent to education that are currently under consideration. Many of these will not advance. Finance Director Valencia agreed to share this list with the full committee.

The Committees for Natural Resources and Forestry, Housing, and Ways and Means are looking at opportunities to advance fire relief, especially the loss of housing. There is a \$25 million land purchase under consideration in the footprint of the Almeda Fire. The goal would be public ownership of a significant land parcel that could provide low-cost housing built in collaboration with the Jackson County Housing Authority. There is also focus on wild fire prevention.

Sen. Golden does not have a committee assignment for education. He encouraged connections with his aide Sarah Settimo, who attended Bellview, AMS, and AHS before graduating from St. Mary's.

Superintendent Bogdanove thanked Sen. Golden for the list of bills. He called attention to:

SB240 – Would remove the limit of the percentage of students who could leave their home public school districts for charter schools as a possible concern. Sen. Golden commented that this bill is unlikely to gain traction.

SB 659 – Could potentially have the effect of initiating state-wide open enrollment.

Sen. Golden noted that many bills are submitted by legislators as political statements to their individual constituents and have unlikely prospects for passage by the full bodies.

Rep Marsh stated that the state's base budget is still to be negotiated. There may be some adjustments in school funding. Governor Brown has a strong commitment to using an equity lens in apportioning state school funding. She also stated that she has working with OSEA to secure some special funding for help in fire-impacted school districts, whose enrollment has been significantly destabilized by the loss of housing to fires.

Superintendent Bogdanove reported that the COVID-19 lock down and mandate for distance learning has reduced the Ashland school enrollment by 5-12%. Rep. Marsh said that this is a state-wide issue and there have not been negotiations yet about possible remediation for impacted districts.

Director Westrick stated that he appreciated the legislative team's attention to the impacts of mandated curriculum. It often disrupts the goal and role of local control and fills up too many of

the required hours of daily instruction. An example is proposed SB683 mandating an anti-racism curriculum. He supports students learning more about U.S. history and all students should be exposed to the manifestations and impacts of racism. But mandating a particular curriculum presents a forced choice for school districts, who must decide what to give up in exchange? He also believes in teacher ownership of instructional products and believes that ASD has developed a useful model for identifying and protecting this.

On the other hand, he agrees that SB580 making class size a mandatory bargaining issue is the wrong approach for all of the reasons above as well as depriving local districts of other tools.

Rep. Marsh asked about ASD plans for re-opening schools and whether the increased opportunities for COVID vaccinations are having an impact. Supt. Bogdanove said that Ashland was moving forward with plans to start re-opening in a hybrid model at the beginning of March, followed by secondary sites after spring break. He did comment that vaccinating educators helps recruit support staffing, which is the deficit Ashland is addressing currently. In response to a recent survey of families, about 70% of K-5 students expressed a desire to return to in-person school. Our HR team estimates that roughly 70% of the district staff will ultimately get the vaccine.

Mr. Decker commented that he very much appreciated the opportunity to have this discussion with Sen. Golden and Rep. Marsh.

Mr. Caudle asked about whether the federal CARES Act will bring additional dollars to the school district. Rep. Marsh responded that the money from that source has been mostly spent.

Ms. Valencia stated that the ESSER Fund (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) allocated about \$500,000 to support the new expenses of providing comprehensive distance learning, including purchase of new equipment for staff and students, as well as curriculum and software tools, and additional support staffing. We have been told that the state will be awarding a second grant but the amount is not yet known.

Rep. Marsh stated that she expects more focus on Career and Technical education and hopes for more support for higher education in this biennium.

Director Prud'homme asked about possible liability relief for COVID-related infections in public schools. Sen. Golden says there were some challenges in the last bill passed because it grants an exemption from liability only if the affected school district carefully follows state health guidance. There are distinctions between required and recommended guidelines. The bill was poorly written.

Rep Marsh reported that there is a continued push from business organizations to exempt them from liability, although no evidence that the business sector has had that problem.

Director Prud'homme mentioned that she has seen other proposed changes to Sunshine laws that could impact public entity boards, including some that might create personal liability risks for serving board members. She asked the legislators to keep an eye on these.

Director Chang asked if the legislature is generally supportive of the governor's recommendations for K-12 funding. With the revenue picture trending worse, level funding in this biennium would be an achievement. Current projections are for a \$1.7 billion revenue gap. The Student Investment Fund is a priority.

Rep. Marsh urged committee members to participate in the Ashland Chamber weekly legislative calls on Wednesday mornings during session to stay apprised of developments.

With thanks from all present to Sen. Golden and Rep. Marsh, Chair Skuratowicz adjourned the meeting at 8:10 m.

Submitted by:

Jackie Schad, Board Secretary

Dated for Board Approval: April 12, 2021

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Board Chair Eva Skuratowicz

Superintendent Samuel Bogdanove