

**Redmond School District  
School Board Work Session  
January 4, 2012**

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**In Attendance:** Chair Jim Erickson, Vice-Chair Cathy Miller, Directors Ric Little, AJ Losoya, Bob Perry, Superintendent Shay Mikalson, RSD Staff; Mike McIntosh, Trish Huspek, Media – Leslie Pugmire-Hole (*Spokesman*), Ben Botkin (*Bend Bulletin*)

Jim Erickson called the work session to order at 4:08pm. Five Board members were present.

Jim Erickson asked the guiding discussion question of, “What does the Board want as an outcome when they listen to the public or respond to a specific concern?”

Cathy Miller stated that she believes there is a great deal of misunderstanding on the roles of the superintendent are and what the roles of the Board are. She does not want anyone to feel dismissed when the Board does not respond to an operational responsibility. The community member needs to be information immediately if it does not fall under the Boards governance responsibility. In addition, the Board needs to make sure they are not making commitments or promises to patrons on behalf of the superintendent. It is extremely important to protect the limited assets (time) that district employees have and to balance the concerns of the patron with a response as to the next step, if any.

Shay Mikalson reported the district needs to create a system where if an item of concern is brought to the Board and it is deemed “operational” the patron should be given instructions to contact the superintendent’s office for follow-up.

The Board engaged in a conversation to clarify the processes and appropriate responses to patron concerns.

When a concern is brought forward during the meeting:

1. The Board will determine if the issue falls under governance or operational:
  - If operational, the person will be encouraged to contact the superintendent for follow-up
  - If it is a governance issue, Board members will listen to the concern ensuring they have a clear understanding of what was said. They will take the issue under advisement, do whatever research they feel appropriate and report back to the rest of the Board at a future meeting.
  - In order for the issue to become a future agenda item for discussion or action, three Board members must concur the issue merits further action.

It will be important for Board members to remember that once a vote is taken on an issue and patrons continue to make comment on the decision, the Board should be respectful to the person but the Board needs to move on to the other business before them.

AJ Losoya stated the Board has encountered that type of situation quite a bit in the last few months. He is confident the board has responded respectfully and moved forward.

Jim Erickson stated, “We need to make sure patrons feel welcome to bring up their concerns but they need to be directed to the appropriate area of responsibility. We need to show respect and listen but there is a point where it becomes detrimental to the Board completing their work.”

In response to a question about how the Board can improve on their communication to the public, Cathy Miller stated that she understands that they cannot please everyone all the time but as a Board they need to continually review and assess processes. “The Board needs to communicate clearly why they make a specific decision and that everything is considered and has merit and value. We need to communicate how we investigate and research a topic, ensuring due diligence has been completed.”

Ric Little stated that he believes the Board needs to take the initiative to be more proactive; publish a document as to why a decision was made and then predict the negative implications. “If we can somehow predict something will be a hot topic, then we need to be more proactive in informing the community.”

Jim Erickson stated it is difficult to identify on what potential hot topic issues will be. “The superintendent can try to be proactive to identify potential areas but there is no guarantee all issues will be addressed.”

It was suggested a document be produced that would provide clarity to the public on the difference between a governance and operational decision is. It would be helpful to provide examples of each and who they would contact in the district to have their questions answered.

All decisions need to be based on the identified Core Beliefs and Values of the Redmond School District. Jim Erickson stated, “I encourage all board members, as they weigh a policy that is about to be made, to look at the Core Beliefs and Values to make sure it aligns with those items. Is the decision consistent with the district philosophy?”

Cathy Miller stated, “This is the culture and educational philosophy of the Board and where we want to go as a team as far as a district, staff, community. This is the culture of where we want Redmond to be in terms of educational excellence and philosophy.” She reported that she comes to meetings having done a great deal of research but sometimes the culture and philosophy piece can change her opinion. “There have been times, when due to budget constraints, something needed to be cut that didn’t align with the district goals but is fiscally responsible.” She believes it is important to give background information during the discussion of an item as to why a Board member is going to vote in a specific way. They need to communicate to the public the reasons for a decision. “If they agree or disagree with a decision, they will at least know the reasoning why a Board member votes in a certain way.”

The Board then started a discussion on what is the best way to address concerns that a board member has.

1. If it is a concern/issue about their specific child, they should contact the building principal first.
2. Unless it is a governance/policy issue, the concern/issue should come to the superintendent.
3. If the Board needs to address the concern/issue, the established process of two other board members concurring would be needed to add it to an agenda.
4. If a Board member believes that policy changes need to occur, they should follow the procedures in Board Policy BHC – Board Communications, to get an item added to the agenda.
5. When in process of debate and approaching a policy decision, the appropriate response to emails received by Board members will be:
  - a) Determine if it is governance or an operational issue.
    1. If help is needed to determine if it is operational, contact the executive assistant
  - b) If operational, respond to the person their concern is being forwarded to superintendent for consideration and response
  - c) If the email is sent to all board members, the primary responder is the chair who determines if it is a policy or operational issue and replies appropriately to the person sending the email (Per Board Policy BHC). If the chair is unavailable, the vice-chair responds.

Superintendent Mikalson stated that when questions are responded to immediately at a board meeting sometimes the communication is not effective or the answer complete. He stated as a district it is our job to inform, but he

would appreciate clarification from the Board if that should happen immediately at the meeting or followed up on at a later time.

Jim Erickson stated that he doesn't agree that a question brought up in a meeting necessarily needs an immediate answer. The question becomes, "How long is a discussion beneficial to what our mission is?" "A non-agenda item that is spoken about should not become an agenda item.

Mike McIntosh recommended that asking clarifying questions around someone's concern would be appropriate. Thank them for their comments and then the Board and superintendent will decide if it becomes an agenda item or followed up on.

Cathy Miller stated that she believes the question should be listed in the official minutes with an indication if it was a governance or operational issue and what the response to the patron was.

During a conversation about what strategies could be used to engage the community, Cathy Miller recommended that once a quarter the Board should engage in a "town hall" type of meeting. This would be an opportunity for the public to engage in a Q & A session that would build on community dialogue.

The meetings could have a focus, for example, "How your children's education is so different than what you had."

Jim Erickson stated his concern is, "How do we engage in a face-to-face dialogue that shows respect but allows us to not put a monkey wrench in the movement of meetings. In our willingness to be respectful and transparent we cannot put a brake on the work we need to accomplish."

Cathy Miller stated that, "When we invite opinions of the audience, we are stepping outside of our protocols. We have no control on what is going to happen."

Ric Little reported that he believes the three minute limit that is stated on each agenda should be adhered to. "If it cannot be addressed in that timeframe, it needs to be written down. This prevents putting anyone on the spot and forcing them to provide answers that might not be complete or accurate."

Bob Perry stated he believes contact information should be required on the sign-up sheet so that follow-up information can be provided as appropriate.

AJ Losoya stated he feels like the Board needs to gauge the situations as they present themselves.

Superintendent Mikalson asked if the expectation on the non-agenda items is to provide answers immediately or is this a time for them to voice their questions and concerns. He stated, "It is hard to condense an answer when it was a multiple step process."

Bob Perry stated that from the perspective of the person who is expressing their concerns, it is a legitimate expectation.

Superintendent Mikalson stated that, "Everything we hear we seriously consider as mechanisms to get better." From his point of view he would support the Board simply responding that he has heard their concern and will act as appropriate. If they have a concern that it isn't being addressed, they are welcome to contact him to have a phone or one-to-one meeting.

Because the Board is scheduled to go into a regularly scheduled Board meeting at 5:30pm, it was recommended this part of the conversation be tabled to allow for review/discussion of the student transfer policy JCA.

### **Policy Revision – JCA – Student Transfers**

Superintendent Mikalson stated this is the third reading of Policy JCA, Student Transfers. Per the Board's requests during the second reading, changes were made to the language in both the policy and administrative regulation to ensure consistent language around the terms, "assigned school", "receiving school", and "assigned district."

Superintendent Mikalson provided clarification that students attending the Redmond Proficiency Academy from Crook County are not on a current transfer because they are attending as a charter school. Under the new policy they would apply as a student seeking transfer to the Redmond School District from their assigned district.

There was discussion if Board members felt they were ready to move the policy forward for approval.

*The work session recessed at 5:22pm to allow the Board to proceed with their regularly scheduled Board meeting. The work session will be reconvened after the regular Board meeting adjourns this evening.*

*Jim Erickson reconvened the work session at 7:26pm to continue the discussion on the processes and procedures of responding to citizen concerns.*

To make sure that all Board members had a clear understanding on what had been decided upon prior to recessing the work session, Jim Erickson provided the following review:

- The stated time limit of three minutes for an individual to address the Board will be adhered to
- Items that are brought forward by the public during "Citizen Participation for Non-Agenda Items" should not become an immediate agenda item. The following procedures will be followed:
  - The chair, with concurrence with the other Board members, will determine if an issue is governance or operational
    - If operational, the person will be encouraged to contact the superintendent for follow-up.
    - If it is a governance issue, Board members will listen to the concern ensuring they have a clear understanding of what was said. They will take the issue under advisement, do whatever research they feel appropriate and report back to the rest of the Board at a future meeting.
    - In order for the issue to become an agenda item for discussion or action, three Board members must concur the issue merits further action.

Board members concurred with the above review.

### **Policy Revision – BHC - Board Communications**

There was discussion around the appropriate response if a concern is emailed to just one of the Board members.

1. Board member determines if it is a governance or operational issue
2. Board member will follow the guidelines as set out in Board policy BHC

Jim Erickson stated it is important that we continue to have face-to-face conversations with patrons but Board members need to make sure they clearly communicate with the person they are meeting with that the issue is either an operational issue and they should contact the superintendent for follow-up, or it is a governance issue that requires three board members to bring this issue forward.

Cathy Miller stated it would be helpful to have a sample statement that can be used in response to a patron email relating to operational issues.

There was discussion about the pros and cons of developing a sample statement. It was reported the statement wouldn't be a "canned response" but would provide Board members a guide for their response.

Bob Perry stated, "I have First Amendment rights and as long as my comments are couched as my personal opinion and not representing the opinions of the entire Board, I can say whatever I like."

Jim Erickson stated that while that is true, “Once a person becomes a board member, our personal opinions can have a ripple effect on the system. Jim acknowledged First Amendment rights but reminded everyone that, “We have limitations to those rights; time, place, and manner. “I am not saying what one should or should not do, I am just asking everyone to consider this. If it could add fuel to a fire, I would ask that this standard be considered.”

Cathy Miller recommended as a starting point to a Board self-reflection process, each Board member reflect on what was talked about tonight and send the executive assistant an email indicating, as a Board, two areas that the Board is doing well, and two that need improvement.

**ADJOURN**

*With concurrence of the Board, Jim Erickson adjourned the second part of the work session at 8:45 pm.*

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Jim Erickson, School Board Chair

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Trish Huspek, Executive Assistant