



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING
BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS
December 14, 2022**

1.0 OPENING ITEMS

1.1 Meeting Date and Location:

December 14, 2022 – Options High School, 2015 Franklin St., Bellingham, WA.

1.2 Call to Order/Land Acknowledgment:

Ms. Bashaw called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. She acknowledged that this meeting is being held on the ancestral homelands of the Coast Salish people.

1.3 Roll Call:

Present: Directors Kelly Bashaw (President), Douglas Benjamin, Camille Diaz Hackler, Jenn Mason, Katie Rose, Superintendent Greg Baker and Sheri O’Day (recorder).

1.4 Annual Organizational Meeting, Election of Officers

Board President: Mr. Benjamin made a **motion**, seconded by Ms. Mason, to nominate Ms. Diaz Hackler for this position for the coming year, and Ms. Diaz Hackler agreed to serve. Unanimous affirmative vote. Ms. Diaz Hackler thanked Ms. Bashaw for serving as president over the past year.

Board Vice President: Ms. Bashaw made a **motion** to nominate Mr. Benjamin for this position for the coming year, seconded by Ms. Mason, and Mr. Benjamin agreed to serve. Unanimous affirmative vote.

1.5 Audience:

Cadence Phelps, a sophomore, believes adults should take care of students. She understands there are some legal reasons why the district has not responded. She recently talked with Mr. Atkins, principal of Bellingham High School, and wishes students were given more information, as it is confusing and tricky to navigate. She is asking the board why people who harm students continue to be employed.

Ceres Lehman would like to point out this is a systemic issue and school employees are mandated reporters. This is a legal protection for students which needs to be upheld. There was a student walkout last year, this is not a new problem. There are many

that students' feelings of discomfort be taken into consideration. Sexual assault is a big deal, and the lack of action speaks for the district. Students are re-living their trauma when they see these adults in the school. She encourages parents to have conversations with their students, even when the conversations are uncomfortable. Students should be heard, loved and seen by all.

Avery Catlin shared that her mother is a teacher at Whatcom Middle School, and last year a student there was locked in a bathroom. The student was not able to safely be in a classroom with other students, so a bathroom was refurbished to be a learning space for him. The communication between students and the school board is troublesome. She believes the school board cares, but hoops and boundaries make it not easy to communicate. Trust and communication are two words she's heard a lot today. There is not a lot of trust because there is no communication between us. She wants to know what happened and only knows limited information. The best students can do is come and talk to the school board, and she asks that the boundaries be less divided.

Evan McDevitt is a student at Squalicum High School. He hopes the number of people attending shows the gravity of this issue. The norms put in place by adults make it impossible to fight for the change that is necessary. Students feel betrayed by the adults in our lives. School staff are concerned with image and he's tired of false promises that are met with empty words. School administrators tell us what is right and what is wrong. Why do administrators cheat us of voices to which they are entitled? Why do they feel they transcend the rules they have taught us? The approach the administration is taking needs to be changed, as trust has been lost due to staff actions. When you will be ready to change with us?

Mikkel Hong stated he doesn't want to be sharing this, but five years ago he reported a sexual assault of one of his children. He sent an email to the principal and teacher, and the principal said a safety plan was put in place. The assaulted student was then stabbed with a pencil by the same student

to the public to use restorative practices, but this is not happening at Options. School staff members can substantially interfere with a student's education. Administrators follow students into the bathroom to watch them urinate. She asked the board to take time to understand the district staff's lack of following policies. Negative consequences should not be used until positive reinforcement has proven to be non-effective. Options High School is supposed to be an opportunity for a new beginning without judgment. She asks the board to take this information into consideration. Camden Morris is the parent of two grade school students who were formerly enrolled in the Bellingham Public Schools but are now being homeschooled. There is a sheer lack of district staff taking responsibility, starting at the top with Greg Baker. You have kids coming here tonight to tell you what your job is, and you should be embarrassed. Sexualization is being promoted to little kids. Every single one of you is of the same opinion, with everyone being about diversity. Listen to other people and other ideas. This is not a one-party system; we are a community and all viewpoints count. How can kids trust adults who don't do the right thing and how many times will it take being in the spotlight to change? Stop the sexualization of kids. It's a shame.

Mark Geri is a former student who has children at Sunnyland Elementary. He is impressed with the students who are here tonight. While a student at Sehome High School, he was called defamatory names and abused. Things in this district do not change or get addressed. He was consistently stuck in a room talking about his feelings with the same people who beat him up. His children in elementary school are being bullied and having those issues ignored by the administrators has been challenging. Certain things should be addressable at the school level, and it should be a safe place. It hasn't been in the past and it isn't now, which is a failure of leadership. He asked that the proposal to pay for legal fees of district staff should not be approved. They made choices that need to be seen by the students here tonight.

1.5

: Summary of Dr. Baker's comments:

Dr. Baker acknowledged our phenomenal students who are here this evening. As educators we are here to work hard, and what we have heard this week is that they want us to listen more and do better. They have things to say, they have pain, and they are not convinced that as adults we are hearing them. It is difficult for staff and the school board to hear their feedback tonight, but it has been powerful, and their honesty gives us direction about what we can do better. The administrative team will continue to lean in. A short recess was taken to allow those who did not wish to stay for the remainder of the meeting to leave.

This past week has been challenging and staff have been engaged heavily in the work. Dr. Baker shared a few highlights from the EL-7 and EL-8 monitoring reports that are included in tonight's consent agenda.

He then shared some photos of celebrations in classes for the World Cup

Some of our schools have had new reader boards installed.

The [School-Based Health Center Planning Task Force](#) is underway. They have recently been looking at how it has been done in school districts in other communities.

A Kwanzaa family event is scheduled for tomorrow evening at Bellingham High School.

Dr. Ken Gass, who served on the school board for 17 years, was recently recognized by the Chamber of Commerce with a [Lifetime Achievement Award](#).

2.0 CONSENT ITEMS:

Mr. Benjamin made a **motion**, seconded by Ms. Mason, to approve the following consent agenda items:

- 2.1 Approval of Minutes of the Nov. 8, 2022 School Board Visit; Nov. 9, 2022 Regular Meeting; Nov. 18, 2022 Special Meetings (2); and Nov. 29, 2022 School Board Visit**
- 2.2 Approval of Expenditures and Payroll November 2022**
- 2.3 Resolution 24-22, Declaring an Emergency and Waiving Bidding Requirements for Carl Cozier Safety/Security Improvements**
- 2.4 Resolution 25-22, Transfer of Funds from Capital Projects Fund to General Fund**
- 2.5 Resolution 26-22, Investment and Signatory Change**

4.3 Board Response to Monitoring EL-5, Communication and Counsel to the Board
This item will be moved to the January 18, 2023 regular meeting.

5.0 INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

5.1

Highlights of comments:

Ms. Mason heard the frustration this evening about what can and cannot be shared about recent events, and that is understandably frustrating for everyone. She acknowledged the students who spoke tonight, specifically acknowledging the bravery it takes to speak at a school board meeting and use their voice to talk about what they believe in. She was a sexual assault advocate for Whatcom County DVSAS (Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services) for 10 years and knows how events can bring up pain for those who have experienced violation and those who have been unsupported. She also appreciates the staff who are listening, leaning in and learning, using this moment to learn what we can do better.

Mr. Benjamin agrees with Ms. Mason's comments. The entire board attended the WSSDA conference in Spokane in November. He attended many meetings, but the best part was all the school board members spending time together. He was nominated for a WSSDA position but declined the nomination. The board's visit to Columbia Elementary School was great, and the "bugs and wishes" presentation was a wonderful example of social emotional learning. He plans to keep investigating how to increase student voice on our board. Each WSSDA board member received two 100-year

Approved:



Camille Diaz Hackler, Board President

Attest:



Greg Baker, Secretary to the Board

Minutes approved: January 18, 2023