

# Board Special Meeting

**Oversight Work Session: Public Affairs; Work Session: Budget**

April 22, 2020, 4:30 – 7:30 p.m.

*Meeting held remotely*



## Minutes

### Call to Order

Director DeWolf called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. Directors DeWolf, Hampson, Harris, Hersey, Mack, Rankin, and Rivera-Smith participated with Microsoft Teams or by phone.

Director DeWolf noted that the meeting was being held remotely consistent with the Governor's Proclamation prohibiting the meeting from being held in person due to COVID-19. Director DeWolf noted that the public had been provided remote access.

### Oversight Work Session: Public Affairs

Director DeWolf chaired the Public Affairs oversight work session. This work session was staffed by Chief of Public Affairs Carri Campbell, Manager of Electronic Prof Dev & Media Operations Edgar Riebe, Manager of Communications Rachel Nakanishi, Communications Spec/Media Relations Lead Tim Robinson, Communications Specialist Tori Sommerman, Senior Webmaster Pauline Amell Nash, and Senior Webmaster Amy Markishtum.

Ms. Campbell provided background on the Public Affairs division and spoke about the division's work related to immunizations. Public Affairs staff introduced themselves and gave a brief introduction of their roles and the department's work to support the immunization campaign.

Ms. Nakanishi spoke about working with the content or business owner to develop a comprehensive communications plan, which is the coordinating mechanism between teams in the division. She noted that the plan lays the groundwork for project goals, the cadence of outreach, the channels or delivery mechanisms, and the type of content that might be used, as well as who can help carry the message. She spoke about planning timelines, work to reach families in multiple ways and consideration of audiences, challenges, or barriers to conveying a message, and different ways of sharing the message. Ms. Nakanishi noted the goal for the immunization campaign was to reduce time out of school, particularly for students furthest from educational justice and the considerations that went into building a plan to meet this goal. Ms. Nakanishi spoke about the steps that were taken with the immunization campaign to work across divisions and reach families through multiple mediums.

Ms. Amell Nash noted that for the majority of SPS communications campaigns, the district website provided a hub of information for our families. Started in the fall, the web team collaborated with our district health services team to create new school nurse webpages on every school website. This new page provided key school nurse contact information, an overview of districtwide health services information, and links to the district health services webpage so families can find health forms, etc. In addition, the district news announcements began posting updates related to the upcoming immunization requirement changes. On Dec. 23, the web team published a web alert that was shared to all public

websites that shared key information, deadlines, and the link to learn more to the news announcement that explained the requirement and upcoming opportunities for immunization. Typically, winter break is one of the slowest web traffic periods for the SPS website, but the news announcement saw approximately 10,000 web visits.

Mr. Riebe described the work SPS TV did with SPS Nursing staff to create two explainer videos about immunizations and also promoted information in Juneau's Journal. Mr. Riebe mentioned that the explainer videos utilized clear graphics to simplify the message, shared interviews with staff and a state expert to explain changes to the law, promoted free school-based clinics, explained the reasons why compliance was important, gave viewers other sources for more information and drove people back to the SPS web page.

Mr. Riebe described how the team pushed videos out on all available channels, to reach a broad audience on Facebook, YouTube, and the TV broadcast and spoke to targeting audiences in different languages, especially where, culturally, immunizations may not be a common practice, and working with community-based groups.

Mr. Robinson spoke about the primary purposes of media relations of the immunization campaign, which were to update media on the status of immunization efforts and to spread essential information to families so they knew how to bring their students' immunization records up-to-date. Mr. Robinson spoke to the timeline and steps for this work, and the impact that outreach to the media and making the student health team available to media had.

Ms. Henderson-Lewis noted that with any and every initiative or change in Seattle Public Schools, the Customer Service Center and The Ombud's Office experience an uptick in emails, calls, and drop-ins to our office as families and staff seek clarity on information they received but also for reassurance, empathy, and the opportunity to discuss their next steps when they aren't sure what to do. The team also helped shuttle diplomacy between families and appropriate SPS Staff and reach a proper resolution when there is a specific issue. During the immunization campaign, the customer service team helped families make sense of what the information meant for them personally and provided that human presence that many need.

Director Harris thanked the Public Affairs division and noted the nimbleness of the team's response to COVID-19. Director Harris requested additional metrics for Let's Talk. Ms. Campbell confirmed information would be provided.

Director Mack asked whether district translation staff are within the Public Affairs division and spoke about communicating with English Learner students and their families through various mediums. Ms. Campbell spoke about collaboration with translation staff and the district organizational structure. Director Rivera-Smith noted she was impressed with Public Affairs' social media outreach and discussed Seattle Public Schools use of radio with Ms. Campbell. Director Rivera-Smith and Ms. Campbell discussed student voice and SPS TV programming. Ms. Campbell spoke about expanding SPS TV programming to include student & school programming and outreach to schools.

Director Mack noted that the Public Affairs Team did a lot of responsive and amazing work. Her question was in relation to culturally responsive communication and engagement. She talked about how it is an interesting time right now because SPS needs to move the web to also focus on these strategies. Director Mack asked what SPS heard from African American Families / Communities, if there is a need for phone calls and in person meetings. Director Mack also asked if there was any thought to continue to

focus on phone calls and direct communication. What is SPS doing to ensure that the team is utilizing those technologies with families?

Ms. Campbell answered that Director Mack is correct, many of our families prefer in-person meetings and phone calls. The team knows this from the engagement they have done in the past and guides our work. We do use phone calls quite a bit—referenced information Rachel Nakanishi provided earlier in the presentation. It is really important to keep a focus on students and families furthest away from educational justice as outlined in our strategic plan. And we can always do more right now. Superintendent Juneau meets regularly with Black church leaders – this is a group we should be engaging and sharing information with. Gave example of how phone calls were used during meal distribution site communication - Created 40 unique phone calls in different languages and by region to reach families. – Additional information provided in last week’s Friday Board Memo.

Director Rankin noted changes from past district communications and asked about working directly with entities who communicate with families from schools, how schools can share back centrally what works for families, and how SPS gets word out to families through schools and partners at the school building. She spoke to ensuring each school knows how to reach every single family and asked about the relationship between Public Affairs and the schools and strengthening that connection. Ms. Campbell spoke about the quick pace in lifting up communications related to the COVID-19 school closure and spoke about exploring further engagement with school leaders, school staff, and partners on communication.

Director Rankin and Ms. Campbell discussed work to share the narrative of SPS and opportunities for sharing good stories and breaking down communication barriers to families. They discussed importance of the messenger and the opportunity to consider how school staff, students, school leaders can help share stories in a different or more impactful way.

Director Rivera-Smith asked about the five customer service norms, as mentioned during the discussion of Let’s Talk, and Ms. Henderson responded that they are to be ready, responsive, respectful, reliable, and reflective. Director DeWolf and Ms. Nakanishi discussed updates to Wikipedia pages. Ms. Nakanishi explained limitations on updating public agency information, but that the team is working to address needed updates.

Director DeWolf and Ms. Campbell discussed the significance of the purchase of new CMS software. Ms. Campbell answered that the website is the most critical/used communication channel. She spoke to the opportunity to thoughtfully engage stakeholders and ensure communication channels meet the needs of families and students furthest away from educational justice.

Director DeWolf asked about the mobile app and usage. Ms. Amell Nash spoke about the SPS school messenger web app used by thousands of families and noted a recommendation to continue the app with the new CMS. Director Mack asked about ADA (American with Disabilities Act) compliance & District-wide communication on ADA. Director Mack was wondering about ADA compliance within the school level, if things directly were coming from teachers, mentioned that educational materials don’t all seem to be ADA. Also asked to what extent does SPS need to make everything ADA?

Ms. Campbell specified that the teachers as well as the SPS team makes sure everything has a cover letter that is ADA explaining how to get support if the actual document can’t be made accessible. Carri Campbell then asked for examples.

An example that was provided by Director Hampson was Blooms, it had been deemed ADA non-compliant but is being used by some teachers. She noted that more information concerning ADA was included in last week's Friday Board Memo.

Director Mack's second question was to clarify what will take place for State of the District this year. Ms. Campbell answered that an annual progress report will be taking its place and looking at maybe doing this every other year. She specified that more information will be coming.

Director Rankin asked about mobile app. Director uses the app more often and it is easier to navigate in comparison to the website. She asked not to get rid of it.

Director Rivera-Smith asked if communications will be helping with the grading policy communication. She also asked for other avenues on reaching out to families & would like to see more channels. Ms. Campbell noted that Initial grading comms have been sent out through email, the website, and social media. The team is also working with Strategies360 to design a social media campaign focused on seniors and grading will be included.

Director DeWolf asked if we utilize SEO (Search Engine Optimization). Ms. Amell Nash confirmed that the team does use SEO. Ms. Campbell thanked everyone and ended the presentation at 6:06 p.m.

### **Work Session: Budget**

Director Hampson chaired the Budget work session. This work session was staffed by Chief Financial Officer JoLynn Berge.

Chief Financial Director JoLynn Berge spoke about reviewing the budget timeline for the remainder of this school year. Capital Project Financial Manager Melissa Coan gave an overview of the capital fund. She explained the beginning fund balance was \$85M and a total revenue of \$329M and the ending fund balance of \$121.8M. She spoke about how the majority of the funds come from levy funds from local property taxes. Ms. Coan reviewed Fiscal Year (FY) 2020-21 recommended total use of Capital Funds. She spoke about facility and annual system projects the anticipated spend amount was \$22M district wide. She spoke about the upcoming Academics, Capacity Management, and District Wide Support for \$27M for the upcoming school year. She reviewed Support Services, Transfers and Reserves - \$64M. Technology district wide will be \$58M in total, with the direct expenditures of \$38M and total transfers of \$23M.

Director DeWolf asked what is being paid for central kitchen. Director of Capital Projects & Planning Richard Best explained packaging equipment for central kitchen to send meals out to elementary schools.

Director DeWolf asked about local levy taxes collection, with current Covid 19 pandemic vs. normal status. Ms. Coan explained the pandemic has been factored in and tax collections are estimated to be slightly lower than prior years.

Director Mack asked about slide 16 technology days for \$8M for professional development. Ms. Berge confirmed it is for the three days professional development in the teacher contract. Director Mack asked where the direct transfers for the \$40M derives. Ms. Coan explained it is for \$23M shown on the tech direct transfer and the slide that shows all the transfers is slide 16 and with the tech days transfer the total is \$64M for transfers.

Director Rivera-Smith asked about water testing and risk management. Ms. Coan explained every year the District does water testing at the schools we are opening we send samples off to make sure levels are at the appropriate amount.

Director Rankin asked if State money is available to do fixture testing from schools, she recalled in the legislature a bill to fund fixtures from the 1990's that are thought to have lead. Ms. Berge explained that item did not pass.

Ms. Berge gave revenue projection updates. She explained revenues have changed because we are currently in a pandemic and the Governor vetoed some of the budgeted increases, one of which was the 10.5FTE for counselors, and the Governor vetoed some transportation funding. More will be known in the coming months. She explained the State will short pay transportation in June, and we will be short our proportionate share. The District will not know until June the amount and we are currently running off of estimates. She gave a possible estimate of levy funding decrease. Transportation funding loss of \$10M over 2019-20 and 2020-21. Professional Development hours for paras, no change, no increase though, holding at 14 hours. She spoke about the city Levy Update to Preschool contract loss of \$200k for 2019-20 and it is unknown how K-12 contracts will be impacted. She explained the State property tax decline of \$1.3M and the State inflationary factor lower by \$1M. Ms. Berge spoke about the \$3M in estimated costs for Covid-19 the District has incurred. The District has signed up for FEMA and Care stimulus but have not heard anything back about them yet.

Director DeWolf asked about federal delegation partnerships can we get information from the board. Superintendent Juneau explained we have been in contact with Puget Sound Educational Service District (PESD) for additional outreach and senators are aware of our need and will keep us aware of opportunities. Ms. Berge added federal rules and waivers for federal spending requirements, and we will be applying to for all waivers possible.

Director Harris asked about a letter received from the City no longer offering funding. Ms. Berge explained it was an email that was unofficial, and nothing is final.

Director Mack asked how the City of Seattle reduction in funding would impact us. Reduction in funds that was going to be spent for specific activities can they be released in one form or another such as layoff or reduction in force if we will not be reimbursed for those services. Ms. Berge explained for this year we cannot, because of employee contracts. But for next year we will need to know by May 1<sup>st</sup> for us to make the proper adjustments to the budget. Senior Advisor to the Superintendent Sherri Kokx added we will continue to talk to the city to come to agreement or make a decision on programs. Chief of Human Resources Clover Codd explained all staff decisions need to be confirmed by May 8<sup>th</sup> to meet contractual and State deadline of May 15<sup>th</sup>.

Director Rankin asked why are Reduction in Force (RIFs) not being discussed for class size per pupil counts. She also has concerns about taxpayer money that was designated for preschool not going towards preschools. 1:1 plan for technology needs and loss of devices. Ms. Berge explained City levy funds do not fund class sizes, those are from our contract. Chief Legal Counsel Greg Narver spoke about the City does have ability to reduce the preschool contract, they do have the right to do that legally.

Ms. Berge spoke about the overall Department of Technology budget, it is based on project work. Over time the district has changed the categories for the various BEX and BTA levies. The amounts shown do not include encumbrances.

Ms. Berge reviewed the BTA IV and BEX V funding levies and that they are funding 1:1 in High School and 2:1 in Kindergarten to 8<sup>th</sup> grade and the district is escalating 1:1 high school rollout now rather than waiting for the fall. She explained for elementary right now is personal devices, supplemented with 8,200 devices gift from Amazon directly to the families of students. She explained the plan for moving forward with escalating computer purchases and that the district is still evaluating impacts on remaining two years of the BEX V levy cycle. Ms. Berge explained the board will need to look at Middle Schools to evaluate if the District should continue at 1:1.

Director DeWolf asked about the 2016 technology levy that was passed and why was only \$2M was spend. Superintendent Juneau explained some hesitancy for previous Board Directors about moving forward with a lot of technology because of screen time. Ms. Berge added all the money the District has earmarked for devices is being spent and we have a small reserve for replacements.

Director Hersey what is it going to take for 1:1 for elementary students to be better prepared. Ms. Berge stated we would still need about 15k devices to get to 1:1 for elementary schools including the Amazon gift. We may have to wait to BTA V or decide to not do some other big thing and shift those dollars. Director Hersey asked if we can provide instruction or support to come back next year for tech support for families about technology and Schoology. Ms. Berge explained a soft launch for volunteer technology line for families that have questions on technology and Schoology. Chief Academic Officer Diane DeBacker explained the District can look into courses for parents to assist with online learning and that she would discuss the topic with the digital learning team.

Ms. Berge spoke about expenditures for 2020-21, including pausing the infrastructure needs, curriculum for ELA grades 6-8 and the planned increase to the Economic Stabilization Fund.

Director Harris asked Ms. DeBacker about the grades 6-8 English Language Arts (ELA) work plan for curriculum. Ms. DeBacker noted the ELA adoption was set to begin this year and brought to the board next spring. It is sad that this may be cut back.

Director Harris asked can other items outside of cutting ELA 6-8<sup>th</sup> be discussed. Ms. Berge explained certainly, however we don't know where the bottom is at for the situation for 2021-22. These were most of the areas we had a choice, and we will not know where we are going until next April after the legislative session concludes.

Director Hampson added these will be very hard decisions ahead and wants to continue to think about the dollar amounts and the unintended consequences. And is thankful for the opportunities ahead to discuss everything in the coming months.

Directors thanked Ms. Berge for her work on this now and in the coming months.

## **Adjourn**

This meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

*This meeting was held remotely per the Governor's [Proclamation 20-28](#), prohibiting public agencies from conducting meetings subject to the Open Public Meetings Act in-person to curtail the spread of COVID-19, and consistent with [School Board Resolution 2019/20-29](#). Public access was provided remotely through Microsoft Teams and teleconference.*